A DISCOURSE Concerning the TRIAL OF SPIRITS.

WHEREIN

Inquiry is made into Mens Pretences to Inſpiration for publiſhing Doctrines, in the Name of God, beyond the Rules of the Sacred Scriptures.

In oppoſition to ſome Principles and Practices of

Papiſts and **Fanaticks**;

As they contradict the Doctrines of the Church of *England*, defined in her Articles of Religion, eſtabliſhed by her Eccleſiaſtical Canons, and confirmed by ACTS of PARLIAMENT.

By *THOMAS PITTIS*, D.D. one of His Majeſties Chaplains in Ordinary.

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A DISCOURSE Concerning the TRIAL of SPIRITS

To the Right Worſhipful

Sr. *Edward Worſeley*, Knight,

Colonel of one of the Regiments of the Country Militia, and Deputy Governour of the Isle of Wight.

Honoured Sir,

Having an unexaminable opportunity of publiſhing ſuch Tracts as this; And having formerly, by your Father been preſented to the Rectory of the Pariſh of Gatcomb; *in the Bounds of which, your Manſion Houſe is ſeated, and in which you live, having the right of Advowſon undoubtedly in your ſelf; I cannot but preſent*

sent these Papers to you, as being the Inheritor of your Fathers Estate, and Vertues too, and of his great kindness to me in particular, which you yet on all occasions continue, and increase by succeeding heaps of favours. I need not relate the Loyalty of your Family, it bearing date with its Antiquity, and has been so manifested to the present World, that a Memorial of mine would be its disparagement, and upbraid the memory of mankind. All know, whose brains are not sunk into Oblivion, how you would have redeemed King Charles the First, that most Pious Martyr of ever blessed memory, when he was a Prisoner in Catisbrook Castle, from the present insolence of the worst of men, to whom, by violence, he was enthrall'd, and the designed mischiefs that were likely to befal him from persons that thirsted after Royal Blood; who

were most indistrous and irreconcilea-
ble enemys to mankind and Cæsar.
You had prudently laid your design,
and were honestly ready, incountred,
and prepared; and at your Post at
the appointed hour. But, alas!
all miscarried through the base treas-
chery of other men, to your misfor-
tune, and much bigger griefs. Af-
ter this you were forced to wander,
and exile your self. And 'twas hap-
py for us that survive your misfor-
tune, that you came off so. Since
the return of our present and most
gracious Soveraign (with whom you
were also expelled, by the rage and
malice of a Pack of unreasonable and
malicious men) your great modesty,
and unalterable affection to the Island
in which you make so considerable a
Figure, (in which I have the privi-
ledge, and honour, of a Native) has
been the only cause of your not being

removed into a larger Sphere. But now, your age, and the greatness of your Merits, together with your old Protestant Church of England Principles, to which you are honestly, and severely addicted, will hardly permit you to suffer an exchange in this World (though I always wish'd it) till you advance to the Glory of the next. I dare not any longer be thus burdensome to your modesty and contentment, that covet retirement in defiance of all your very large capacities; But yet, Sir, give me leave to pray, from the true resentments of a grateful mind, that the great God, who is far exalted above all Beings, would continue to preserve your most Loyal and exceedingly devout self; Your most Vertuous and extraordinarily pious, and modest Lady, and the two Gentile and excellent Branches happily sprung, and nourished too,

from You, who are the root of both, much longer than I, in this World, ſhall be capable of remaining,

Dear SIR,

London, Nov. 1. 1683.

Your moſt affectionate and moſt humble Servant,

Tho. Pittis.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

from You, who are the root of both, much longer than I, in this World, shall be capable of remaining,

Dear Sir,

London, Nov. 1.
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Your most affectionate and most humble Servant,

Tho. Pittis.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

TRIAL

OF

SPIRITS.

CHAP. I.

THE Third Person in the Sacred Trinity, one God blessed for ever, is frequently abused by the pretences of men, to such Revelations as are inconsistent with the truths of the Gospel,

and many Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion, which the Holy Ghoſt at firſt inſpired men to deliver: And though this began in the Apoſtles days, when the myſtery of iniquity, by the *Gnoſtick* defection, began to work: Yet it has continued and improved men in their villanies throughout the ſeveral Ages of the Church: Nay ſo far that Treaſon, and Murder, and open Rebellion, are conſecrated by thoſe that pretend to be inſpired; and they blaſphemouſly make the Holy Spirit of God, that breaths forth peace and quietneſs upon the World, to become the Patron of the greateſt and moſt diſturbing impieties that ever infeſted the Societies of mankind. This, though, we have been loth to believe it, we are now convinc'd of by a woful experience; an experience which had been purchaſed by our utter ruine, unleſs Gods Providence, aſſiſting, and favouring the wiſdom of our Superiours, encouraged by ſome Loyal and unwearied reſolutions, had happily prevented it. We have two ſorts of men, (both pretending to an infallible inſpiration, though on different grounds) that ruine and deſtroy

ſtroy the Principles of Chriſtianity under a ſhew to advance them: And though we were unwilling to think that men who ſeem'd at ſo great a diſtance from each other, ſhould ever reach to join hand in hand, and that the ſame principle ſhould reconcile ſuch different pretenſions: Yet as *Samſon*'s *Foxes* were joined together by their Tails, though their heads looked away from one another; So now we ſee thoſe that breath inſpirations from the Pope, and they that boaſt more immediate ones from Heaven confederating, (though before expected by the moſt obſerving and conſiderate men) to houſe the corn and tares together, that Gods Harveſt may become their own, and they may reap where they never ſowed: And certainly when ſuch attempts both by a ſeparate, and united force, are made againſt all Order and Religion, intitling God to the Patronage of a lie, making the Spirit of Truth to contradict himſelf, and crucifying Chriſt, under a pretence to exalt him: when our own Kingdoms are ready to be deſtroyed by cheating us out of our Properties, and our Lives, with a ſpecious ſhew of advancing the

Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, and, to lift up his Scepter, our Soveraign's muſt firſt be broken in pieces: when diſorders tending to ſubverſion and ruine, are plainly legible in the affairs of men; coals are blowing to ſet all our Houſes on fire, and we tread thoſe paths that will lead us to confuſion, and all this while men profeſs to be ſerving a God of Order: when multitudes pretend to be ſent from God, that ſpeak contrary to his written word, and have no other Miracle to prove their Principles, but the ſtrangeneſs of their villany in rooting up the Laws of Nature and Society: when ſo much braſs is currant amongſt us inſtead of gold, and our ſilver is every day exchang'd for droſs, and we are ready to be made the companions of *Owls*, or what is worſe, of Thieves and Murderers; 'tis high time to bring forth the Touchſtone, to enquire into the value of things before we receive them, that counterfeit coin may not claim the ſame priviledge with what is inſtamp'd with *Cæſar*'s Image, nor an enterance opened for the Pope of *Rome*, riding in a *Kirk*, born on the backs of thoſe that know not what they

they carry: that they may bring Popery in triumph to us, like the *Grecians* lodged in the belly of that Wooden and inſenſible Horſe, that entred *Troy* and ſacked the City, and ſo gain'd that by an eaſie ſtrategem, which ten years ſiege could not effect. For theſe and ſuch like reaſons (if men will now hearken to any) I have choſen this Subject to Diſcourſe on, that, if poſſible, we may ſeparate the chaff from the wheat; diſtinguiſh betwixt the Doctrines of Apoſtles, and thoſe of Devils, and mark out the Spirit of Antichriſt, that it may be known from that of our Saviour, that names may no longer confound things, nor Satan be received by any of us, though he *transforms himſelf into an Angel of light*; leſt we miſtake that for *Samuel* in his Mantle, which only the Witch of *Endor* raiſes. And therefore *let us not believe every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God, becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone into the world.* And from theſe words, I ſhall raiſe my Diſcourſe.

In this Epiſtle, S. *John* endeavours to confirm Chriſtians in the profeſſion and practice of the Chriſtian Religion,

notwithſtanding all Objections to the contrary; and therfore gives them ſufficient caution to beware (1.) Of ſuch Hereſies as deſtroy the foundation, ſuch as interfer'd with the great Doctrines and Authority of the *Meſſiah*; ſuch as under ſome great pretences of purity, and preciſeneſs, might introduce Factions and Schiſms, and diſſolve that ſtrict love and union which ought to be among the Profeſſors of the Goſpel: Theſe things ſome were prone unto in the firſt and early times of Chriſtianity: As ſoon as the Church had put forth leaves, the *Caterpillars* were ready to devour them: (2.) Becauſe the Church of Chriſt was planted in the midſt of *Jewiſh* Superſtition, and Heathen Idolatry; and a Sect was now ſprung up in the world that, under the names of Chriſtians, had provided Principles which in times of danger might equally ſuit with both, or either, and ſo could ſhelter themſelves from one ſtorm, and raiſe another, if the wind blew from either quarter: The Apoſtle therefore bids men *to beware of Idolatry*, this being a plain renunciation of their Religion, as Hereſie would both maim and wound

wound it: *Little children* (ſayes he) *keep your ſelves from Idols*: and what he cloſes his Epiſtle with, is, what we all cloſe our prayers with: And that we may be alſo delivered from the inſinuations or Society of both theſe ſorts, let all the people ſay, *Amen.*

From the conſideration of this deſign of our Apoſtle, we may plainly ſee how ſuitable this whole Epiſtle is to the preſent humours and diſtractions among us, and how ſoon, were the advice imbraced, it would cure us of thoſe languiſhing diſtempers, under which we ſeem to faint and die: The extremities of diſeaſe vex and torture us, and no ſooner have we got off a cold fit, which makes us almoſt ſhake and ſhiver into aſhes, but the hot one comes on, which fires and almoſt is ready to conſume us; Nay, a ſtrange mixture of both encounter us, rather than we ſhall recover and live, and thoſe things which the vigour and ſtrength of our conſtitution is able to baffle whilſt ſeparate and apart, being conjoined, create a new diſeaſe, which troubles the Phyſician, and puts him to the utmoſt of his skill; though I hope it will never be able to baffle him,

or leave us to be a prey to vermine, or the great diſeaſe and peſt of men: Let us follow the rules of this Apoſtle, that what ever injuries our bodies may ſuffer (which in too many are Martyrs already by the great fears and uncertainties of their minds) our ſouls may be ſafe and ſecure, *and kept unblameable to the coming of the Lord Jeſus*: Let us be united in our common profeſſion, not ſtaggered with the high pretences of others; nor let us yet relax our diligence from the diſcourſes of any that will at all adventures be ſecure among our ſelves; But whatever notions of infallibility on the one hand, or preſent and particular inſpiration on the other, ſhall be preſented to us, to debauch us from our Principles; Let us well examine before we believe; receive nothing that may contradict natural Religion, or what is ſuperadded in the word of God, that publick and plainly declared revelation, to which there need no additions to make the man of God *wiſe unto ſalvation*: But let us follow the Apoſtles advice, *and try the Spirits whether they are of God, becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world.*

By

By the word *Spirit*, here is plainly meant any one that under a pretence of Inſpiration or aſſiſtance from the Spirit, publiſhes any new Doctrine to the world, in the age of the Goſpel, and ſo includes both Papiſts and Enthuſiaſts; The one tying the Spirit to the Chair of the Pope, the other to their own Dreams and Phancies: And this interpretation, as it is generally aſſented to, is plain and open to every man that will either conſider the ſcope of the Epiſtle, or the reaſon of this advice of the Apoſtle, why we ſhould *not believe every Spirit, becauſe many falſe Prophets are come forth into the world*; and therefore we are to examine the Doctrines, which any pretender to the Spirit teaches, *leſt we are led by the authority of any into ſnares, that may captivate and deſtroy our ſouls.*

Now although this caution of Saint *John*, primarily relates to the *Gnoſtick* defection; yet it is a direction to all Ages, and may guard us from all the pretenſions of men that, under a ſpecious authority from the *Spirit of truth*, vent falſe Doctrines to the World, in any period of the Chriſtian Religion; Becauſe both the Duty and the Argument

ment to inforce it will be of a perpetual concernment, as long as *falſe Prophets come forth into the world.* Yet becauſe the *Gnoſticks* are moſt immediately reflected on, as being the Antichriſt, ſo early appearing in the Chriſtian world, to defeat this Religion under a denomination from it, boaſting ſome extraordinary knowledge, when they were men both ignorant and vile; we muſt enquire into the particular reaſon, why the Apoſtle in this place cautions men to beware of theſe, whoſe faults were ſo ſcandalous, that they ſeem manifeſt to all: The reaſon of this (next to that which is more general, the proneneſs of men to any error that may gratifie themſelves, and become either their ſecurity or pleaſure) is the ſame, why the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall neither be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come; becauſe the *Gnoſticks* plainly deſtroyed the Goſpel, although by a different Argument from the former: The former againſt whom that ſevere, though deſerved, Sentence was pronounced, invalidated all our Saviours Miracles, which proved his Doctrine to be Divine, and himſelf the *Meſſiah* ſent from God, by attri-

attributing them to the power of the Devil; but the *Gnoſticks* did in effect the ſame thing, by retaining, upon occaſion, the Ceremonies of the *Jews*, which our Saviour had aboliſhed, if he were owned as a perſon ſent from God to void the old Law, and eſtabliſh a new: So that thoſe who embraced what he came to vacate, in effect denied him to be come in the fleſh; and conſequently deſtroyed the obligation of the Goſpel, by renouncing the *Meſſiah*, whoſe authority eſtabliſhed this new Law as a Rule to the World: Nay, by this rejection of the Son, they diſowned the Father, who, *by a voice from Heaven*, and giving him *power to work Miracles*, gave a teſtimony to his Perſon and his Doctrine: And therefore our Apoſtle (reflecting upon theſe men) ſaies; *Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jeſus is the Chriſt? He is Antichriſt that denieth the Father and the Son: whoſo denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father, but he that acknowledgeth the Son, the ſame hath the Father alſo,* (1 John. 2 *Chap.* 22. 23.) And in the 4*th Chap.* 3. *v. Every Spirit* (or teacher) *that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is not of* God;

God; and this is that Spirit of Anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

HAving thus given an account of part of this Epiſtle of S. *John*, together with thoſe, of whom the Apoſtle cautions men to beware; I ſhall farther explain and illuſtrate the words, to render them yet more uſeful to our ſelves by conſidering in them, (1.) A Caution, (2.) An Exhortation, (3.) The reaſon of both. The Caution is; *Not to believe every Spirit:* The Exhortation, *To try the Spirits, whether they are of God:* The Reaſon both of this Caution and Exhortation is, *becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world.*

I begin with the Apoſtles Caution: *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*; If all that men utter pretending to be inſpired, were without any ſevere conſideration to be entertain'd, and what they deliver, were to be believ'd, there would no more need the Apoſtles caution than our own care: But when we

we live in an Age, in which Propoſitions and Doctrines are delivered, that too plainly contradict each other; ſome of which are impious and abominable; others at firſt audit, fooliſh, and ridiculous; and a third ſort, that tend to diſturbance and ruine, waſting Property, making our Kingdoms large *Aceldama*'s, and our Cities the places of dead mens ſculls, and are apparent enemies to human Society: When, under the pretence of a Catholick Religion, Doctrines of purity, propoſals to advance the Scepter of Chriſts Kingdom, Principles ſhall be inſinuated, that if purſued, with that furious zeal, which they require, will effectually deſtroy thoſe things indeed, which men endeavour to maintain in words; If our bleſſed Saviour may thus be fought under his own Banner, the cauſe of God cover abominations, murder be acted for the glory of our Maker, Blaſphemy be ſpoken by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, and the method to render Princes glorious, ſhall be by ſtabbing, or beheading: If the moſt horrid wickedneſs ſhall be palliated under the cloke of Religion, a new Commandment ſhall be pretended for

breach

breach of the old, and the Moral Law ſhall daily be violated by inſpiration: If men under pretenſions to the guidance of that Spirit which inſpired the firſt deliverers of the Goſpel, to be a Rule to ſucceeding Ages and Generations, ſhall hang out new lights to the world, that take away all the glory of the old, and preach to us another Goſpel, bearing their Chriſt only pictured on their Standards and Banners, and their Goſpel to us on the points of Swords: Nay, when the Spirit, in the propagation of the Goſpel, neither preſcribed nor uſed ſuch methods, but quite contrary, thoſe of faith, and patience, humility, and ſelf-denial, which did not interfere with the Government of Princes, but made men actively, or paſſively, to obey: And when the ſame Spirit has expreſly declared, *that in the latter times there would be ſuch a falling away from the faith*, that men would ſo far depart from the ſtanding rules of the Goſpel, *as to give heed to ſeducing Spirits, and doctrines of Devils*, (1 Tim. 4. 1.): Nay when the great Lord and Authour of our Religion has acquainted the world, *that many falſe Prophets ſhould ariſe*, with

with ſuch earneſt pretences, and ſtrong deluſions, *that ſhould almoſt ſhake the very Elect*, (thoſe whom he had choſen to put his Name and Character upon) with, *Lo here is Chriſt, or lo there*; exalting ſeveral, though falſe *Meſſiahs*: It will become us to conſider any new pretenſions beyond the rule we have already learned, and not to receive Opinions at adventure, but to make a more ſtrict, and conſiderate, enquiry, *and not to believe every Spirit*.

And that (1.) Becauſe we have already entertained a ſtanding Rule of Faith and Manners, by which all Chriſtians ought to be directed to the final period and conſummation of Ages: And though this great and Characteriſtical Principle of Proteſtants, is contradicted both by the Papiſts and Enthuſiaſts, whilſt the former equal their Traditions with the Scriptures, and the latter their own fancies and dreams; both upon occaſion, beſtowing ſuch ignominious titles on the Bible, that they would think it uncivil if they ſhould be given to any of their own writings: Yet S. *Paul* tells us, *that the Scriptures are able to make us wiſe unto*

unto Salvation; and being given by inſpiration from God, cannot be falſe without ſuppoſing him a liar: Nay, the Apoſtle goes on in their commendation, *that they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God* (much more the people) *may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works*, (2 Tim. 3. 15, 16, 17.). The deſign of that Goſpel which we have embraced, ſufficiently declares it to be a full and compleat rule of life; that, which if followed, brings peace and welfare to us here; and eternal happineſs in that life which is to come: For it teaches us *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in the world; and to look for a bleſſed hope and immortality*; for which the former way of living prepares us: (*Titus* 2. 11, 12, *&c.*). Nay, ſo perfect and compleat is this rule, and ſo deſigned to direct us to the end of the world, that the Apoſtle denounces a Curſe againſt any that teach another Goſpel, or Rule of life, different from, or contradictory to, this; *though an Angel from Heaven* ſhould prove to be the deliverer: And

repeats it twice in the ſame Chapter, that it may be ſufficiently declared, and ſtand as a memorial to all Ages: (*Gal.* 1. 8, 9.). And Saint *John*, in the cloſe of his *Revelations*, ſufficiently reproves all new pretenſions, by telling the world, that, if any man ſhall make additions to this, which was compleat before, God ſhall add unto him the Plagues that are threatned in it: *And if any ſhall take away from it, his part ſhall be taken out of the book of life*, (Rev. 22. 18, 19.). The perfection of the Scriptures is a point which Proteſtants have alwaies held, as that which, as it is moſt true, ſo it is their moſt ſure defence againſt all the aſſaults of *Rome*, and others: And this is what the Ancient Fathers tried Doctrines by of old, and reprov'd Hereticks, by what was written: Although, according to the Education or diſpoſition of thoſe that oppoſed them, they wanted not, but made uſe of, Arguments from Reaſon and Philoſophy, and the natural Religion of mankind. Now the Scripture being a ſafe, becauſe it is a true, Rule; and true becauſe given to us by Authority from God, who gave ſufficient teſtimony to it, by inſpiring,

ſpiring, and encouraging the deliverers of it; and farther, it is atteſted *by ſigns, and wonders, and divers Miracles*: And a ſafe rule it is, becauſe it has all that tends to the perfection of our natures, and the ſaving of our ſouls, and is compleat in the delivery of all the *Articles of the Chriſtian Faith*, and all the neceſſary Rules of life; And is declared to be ſtanding and perpetual; as well to aboliſh the old Law to the *Jews*, as to open a door of hope to the *Gentiles*; and to obviate all the contradictions of either: Nay, it ſufficiently becomes its own interpreter, when men are aſſiſted by thoſe ordinary advantages which Education, and the grace of God gives them; If they conſult their Gui des, diligently compare one place with another, and are humble, and modeſt, in their enquiries: *How then can we believe every Spirit?* Raſhly receiving Opinions at adventure; ſince this ſtanding Rule may be contradicted by them; or oppoſed under a ſeeming ſhelter of its own; whilſt men wreſt it to others ruine, as well as to their own deſtruction.

Secondly, To believe every Spirit, is to unman our ſelves, render us ridiculous, and expoſe us to the contempt and ſcorn of all conſidering men in the world. For ſince, not only S. *John*, but continual experience aſſures us, that there are *falſe Prophets in the world*, and that they vent contrary Doctrines to thoſe that are true; To attempt to *believe every Spirit*, is to attempt impoſſibilities; And this is not only fooliſh, but unreaſonable; ſince no man can poſſibly believe contradictory Opinions to be, at the ſame time, true. But ſuppoſe they are received ſucceſſively to one another: Yet it argues great levity and inconſtancy in men, *to be carried about with every wind of Doctrine*; want of judgment to be ſo eaſily perſuaded; and that they were careleſs in their firſt choice, who are ſo readily prevailed upon for a ſecond: That they never were ſetled upon the old foundation, who, on all occaſions, remove to a new; and were not true to their firſt Love, who cannot be conſtant upon the ſight of another, but alter their affections upon every view of a new face, and are pleaſed with all the parts of variety. Now, theſe are blemiſhes

blemiſhes in the minds of men; mutable tempers, without any conſiderable reaſon, being blots, and a diſparagement to mankind, whoſe rational ſouls give them the priviledge of thinking, and enable, and admoniſh, them to conſider well before they chuſe: And when thus they have, by argument and judgment, made their choice; They are not to be eaſily moved from it: Unleſs upon as wiſe, and deliberate thoughts, and ſtronger reaſons than thoſe by which they yielded to the truth of the firſt Opinion, they remove from it, and chuſe another. He that is unſetled in his mind, or no longer fix'd than another object is preſented, creates ſuch diſturbances to himſelf, that he makes his life troubleſom and tragical, and is much to be pitied, (if his unquietneſs will permit him to ſtay at home, and not make others ſhare with him) and lamented by all thoſe who know the ſweetneſs of ſettlement and reſolution; that have conſidered what they can, upon fitting circumſtances, part with; And what they are reſolved to adhere to with all the hazards of their lives, and Fortunes. Alas! the wavering

man has no peace; though, for his own reputation, he may often pretend it: But, as S. *James* ſaies, *he is like a wave of the Sea, driven with the wind, and toſs'd*, (Jam. 1. 6.). Like a diſeaſed, ſick man upon his Bed, he tumbles about from place to place, and carries always a Wind-mill in his head, which grinds him according as the wind veers, and turns; He neglects his Calling (if he has any); Or, if he has none, better employments, to drive with a ſtrange Phanatic fury about the world, ready to overturn all he meets with, to enquire concerning news, and projects, that he may embrace all, and be true to neither: And ſo the man renders himſelf unfit to be either a friend or a Chriſtian, and becomes a fool by thoſe methods by which he would yet be accounted wiſe. But he that has well meaſured his principles by the rule of Gods word, and has diſtinguiſhed betwixt what is fundamental, and what is circumſtantial; who has bound his life to a ſtake, dyed daily in his own thoughts, and reſolved well, when it is Religious to ſuffer decently; How far he is able, upon juſt occaſion, to comply with

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the commands of men veſted in lawful Authority; and where the points and limits are, beyond which he muſt not ſtep a foot; But, if he periſh, he will periſh there, that ſo he may not eternally periſh: This man ſtands unmoved at tempeſts and ſtorms, does his duty according to his ſtation, and the juſt commands of his lawful Superiours: And, if the Heavens fall, juſtice ſhall alwayes be done by him: He can be, otherwiſe than his place requires, unconcerned at ſeeming tempeſts that threaten, or that thunder which begins the ſtorm: He knows when his life, or eſtate, or liberty, muſt be Sacrificed; when by lawful Authority, willingly; and when by unlawful, it muſt be by force taken: And, therefore goes on cheerfully, and faithfully, as far as he can, on the ſide of Law, and juſt Authority, putting it in Execution; and ſtops when an higher Rule will permit him to go no further: And certainly, as this prevents all anticipation of evil, ſo is it ſuch a ſteady and well conſidered reſolution, that is more manly and rational than to be driven like the Clouds in the Air, and to be alwayes like the Sea in motion,

tion, ſometimes forward, and ſometimes backward, without any fixed reſt or quiet; Or, by being ſo ready to *believe every Spirit*, to entertain none kindly as we ought.

Thirdly, We muſt not *believe every Spirit*; becauſe, if we give our ſelves too great a liberty, it will be difficult, indeed impoſſible, to diſcern thoſe that are true from the falſe. If we once get into the *Wilderneſs*, we may travel forty years there, and neither know when we are in, or out of the way, and wander about, God knows whither: We may murmure and repine, and blame each other, whilſt the fault will yet remain in our ſelves, and our very travail becomes our puniſhment, till at laſt we die and periſh in a Wilderneſs, which becomes the enterance to greater darkneſs. Alas! the Chriſtian Religion (though much debauched by the corrupt intermixtures, and diſgraced by the vicious lives, of men:) is not now to be revealed to the world; nor are its Records ſo hidden or loſt, that the Principles of it are no where to be found; nor are men, yet, ſo blockiſh and unlearned, that they cannot read, ſo as

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to underſtand them: If men were ſo blind, thoſe that are as blind might lead them into the ditch. But the principles of Chriſtianity (beſides what was revealed in the Old Teſtament) are now above ſixteen hundred years ſtanding, and have been handed down, from age to age, with their original records: And therefore this Religion becomes matter of fact, not invention: And all the queſtion muſt now be, What was at firſt delivered? The wiſe and grave reaſon of men, muſt not controll the Wiſdom of God, nor make another thing of that which God ſent his Son to declare to the World, and has been conveyed to us, with as great a certainty, as any thing antecedent to the time we live in. We are not, now, by diſcourſe or inſpiration to make to our ſelves another Goſpel, under the notion or pretence of the old: This is not a thing ſubject to the Maxims of every ſquirting, and half-witted, Philoſopher; nor to be moulded according to the intrigues and deſigns of a ſubtle and projecting Stateſman: It is not to be ſpued out of the mouth of the *Leviathan*, nor cunningly to be

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fleered out of the Works of *Philo*, nor blended with any Doctrines of *Epicurus*, that may prepare men for an indulgence to their vice, or perſwade them to disbelieve ſome of the greateſt and moſt ſubſtantial points of Chriſtianity. Our Religion is, now, too old to be made new: nor muſt we model that, which has run through ſo many Ages, by any tricks or devices of our own; nor muſt it be ſervant to any mens ambition; as if their ſecular intereſt or opinion were to be their guide; or phancy, putting on the name and garb of conſcience, were to be a Rule for ſuch as call themſelves Chriſtians: *To the Law and to the Teſtimony* (ſayes the Prophet), *if any ſpeak not according to this rule, it is becauſe they have no light in them:* (Iſa. 8. 20.). *And we have a more ſure word of Prophecy* (ſayes S. *Peter, Epiſt.* 2. *Chap* 1. *ver.* 19.). *whereunto you do well, that ye take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in a dark place.* If we forſake therefore the tryal of the Doctrines and Pretences of men by the Scriptures, (which rightly underſtood, are our only ſafe Rule) we have no way to diſtinguiſh a bold pretender, from him

who

who is inſpired from above; If ſuch perſons were now to be expected, after the Canon of Scripture, the Rule for mens lives, have been ſo long ago compleated. For by inclining to believe any new revelation beyond the Scripture, we ſuppoſe that an inſufficient Rule: (the ſufficiency of which true, *Engliſh*, Church Proteſtants have alwayes defended with ſucceſs): And, if the revelation be contrary unto it, it makes that Spirit that dictated the firſt, a lyar, if the latter be received and ſuppoſed true. But grant what men, of ſuch an eaſie belief, and ſuch ſpeedy reſolutions, that admit of as ſpeedy changes, would, without any proof, have yielded to them: Yet I would fain know, how men, in their circumſtances, are able any way to ſatisfie themſelves concerning the propoſition which they pretend to be inſpired in, and thereby authorized to deliver unto others: I am afraid confidence will be their only argument to recommend it to others, and opinion, intereſt, and a ſtrong preſumption, or what is worſe, Atheiſm and Knavery, to themſelves.

For

For (1.) ſuppoſing the Spirit of God in its Dictates unto men alwayes uniform and conſiſtent with it ſelf, how can there be different inſpirations to preſcribe various Rules oppoſite to each other at the ſame time for men to guide their belief and converſations? The Apoſtle tells us, that as there is but *one God*, and *one Lord*, with undoubted authority over the whole World; ſo there is but *one Spirit* to influence the minds of men, *one Baptiſm* that enters them into the Church of Chriſt, and but *one Faith* to be embraced by them; And therefore the *Church* is but *one Body*; (*Eph.* 4. 4, 5, 6.). How then can we reaſonably admit the pretence of any mans inſpiration, that avers he ſpeaks from the Dictates of the Spirit, which is within him, to publiſh any Rules of Religion different from what we have received before? And if ſuch a pretender means only his own Spirit, the ſoul which acts within the body, we can underſtand no more than his judgement and opinion: Though phraſes by ſuch canting, are rendered equivocal, to ſtartle the infirm; but are foreign to our purpoſe, when reflected on by con-

conſidering men: We well know, that the deſign of Chriſtianity, was to unite the World under one profeſſion, and in religious affairs, to ſubject it to the ſame rules of life: How then can any with Religion or modeſty, pretend another inſpiration for new directions, when the former, if they were ever true, are ſufficiently in the New Teſtament declared to be perpetual, and obligatory till Chriſts coming to judgement, when he ſhall paſs ſentence upon the whole World, and deliver us into our everlaſting ſtates, no leſs than his Mediatory Kingdom back unto the Father? Theſe are ſuch inconſiſtent things, that none but mad men can now expect any inſpirations, to deliver new Doctrines to the World.

(2.) I would fain learn of any bold man, that publiſhes, under a pretence of inſpiration, new Doctrines different from the old, how he knows himſelf to be inſpired? We find thoſe that were formerly ſo (beſides ſome certain token to themſelves, which neither we, nor our pretenders, can now give a certain account of, though we may ſome probable conjectures) could

work

work Miracles for the ſettlement of belief both in themſelves and others: But no ſuch things appear now; though lying wonders are publiſhed to the World, carrying only the teſtimony of thoſe that invent the ſtory, or others that are hired to ſacrifice the truth to the confidence of an impoſtor; and therefore one would think, ſuch things as theſe, ſhould, at the utmoſt, only deceive the ſimple, whilſt they that enſnare them, having other deſigns, beyond their reach, vent what they do not believe themſelves, that they may accompliſh their own carnal ends, by the religious eaſineſs and ſimplicity of others: For, upon the view of thoſe various Sects, viſible either abroad, or among our ſelves, that any way pretend to be inſpired to what they deliver to others; we find them publiſhing, by this authority, doctrines to be believed, and Rules of life, quite different, nay, oppoſite to one another; and purſue each other according to the advantages they receive, with a greater eagerneſs, and hotter perſecution, than we at any time oppoſe them all: And if the Holy Spirit be but one, (as yet I hope I may without much

aſſuming

assuming or confidence affirm he is) if it be alwayes consistent with it self, there can be but one inspiration at one time true, and the rest that pretend differently from this, make, at once, themselves, and God a Liar; whilst they suppose him to contradict himself, and they become the publishers of such contradictions. Besides, if the Spirit, these wild men pretend to, does inform their minds of the principles they deliver by an immediate illumination, or impulse upon their spirits; either they feel the stroke made upon them by this invisible power, so that they can tell the time (as the Prophets of old) when the Word of the Lord comes to them; or else they are raised by degrees into a presumption, that they have this Spirit which thus forces them to declare new Doctrines to the World: If they pretend to know when the stroke and impulse is made; why does not one immediately of a Fisherman become an Apostle without any study, or former gradual practice? without being bred in the Schools of the Jesuits; or by long hearing the Cant, at home, by which he is educated and trained to it;

it; why does he not on a ſudden riſe up and publiſh ſuch conſiſtent Doctrines, as may be ſuitable to the reaſon of thoſe whom he would perſwade to embrace them; or at leaſt, not thwarting and contradicting the natural Religion of mankind? But ſince we find this impoſſible among them; or the utmoſt of their skill, to be by ſome mechanick operation, or perhaps, by an unaccountable influence from the Prince of the Air: Why ſhould any be ſtartled at, or give credit to new Apoſtles, when our Rules are compleated by thoſe, that were commiſſioned of old? If we ſearch into the bottom of theſe things, we ſhall find them, either voluntary Cheats, when thoſe that own them, make them ſubſervient to bad deſigns; or ſuch, as men, being deceived themſelves by a bad conſtitution, a corrupt education, or a ſuggeſtion from the Devil under the form of an Angel of Light, endeavour, either through ignorance or ſubtilty, to impoſe upon eaſie believers.

For, (1.) There is no promiſe for ſuch immediate inſpirations to dictate new Rules of life, made to any, but to Apo-

Apoſtolical men in the firſt Age of the Goſpel, who were to deliver what was to be the ſtanding Law to all ſucceeding Generations: And therefore there is no ground of hope for ſuch things as theſe, in the preſent Age wherein we live: Becauſe inſpiration being an immediate influence from God himſelf, his Will enlarges or reſtrains this power to us; and whenever men expect with reaſon any thing from him, it muſt be grounded upon a promiſe, on which we may hope and rely, becauſe all Gods Promiſes are as certain as his Truth, and that equally certain with his Being: There being, therefore, no promiſe of this made beyond the Age and Lives of the Apoſtles, as no men can now rationally expect any inſpiration to confirm their pretenſions, ſo neither can others with ſobriety believe them. (2.) Inſpirations to preſcribe new Rules to the World are ſo needleſs after a compleat Law is already given that is to be ſo laſting and perpetual as the Goſpel, that were they now to be found amongſt men; if they ſhould be contrary to it, they would aboliſh and deſtroy the Goſpel: But if the pretenders

ders are inſpired only to the propagation of the ſame truths revealed there, this ſecond inſpiration will appear
h needleſs, and ſo tax the wiſdom of God, to do ſo great and extraordinary a thing to no purpoſe; becauſe there are the ſame rules already reveal'd, written down in the firſt age, and by the ſpecial providence of Almighty God (notwithſtanding the diligent and furious attempts of the powers of the Earth to interrupt the conveyance) handed down from age to age, and yet remaining publick and open amongſt our ſelves, in our own language, that all may read and underſtand: The continuance of men diſtinct from the multitude, who by a different manner of living and Education, are enabled, and bound by a ſpecial duty, to read, and interpret theſe Scriptures to the people, renders a new inſpiration uſeleſs to deliver theſe things to the world, which art and human induſtry can do: God might, indeed, if he had ſo pleaſed, have continued his Doctrines and Rules of life, by writing them daily in every mans breaſt, and inſpiring every individual amongſt us; But if he had done ſo at firſt, there had been

been no need of the Twelve Apoſtles, nor our Saviours own preaching to the world, but only to be born and die, and riſe again: and if it were afterwards continued, it would render preaching, and reading a written word uſeleſs, eaſe us of much pains and toil; and all our inſpired and blown up men of giving themſelves or others the trouble to come to preach or to hear them at a Conventicle. And ſo inſpired men compendiouſly preach away their own Office: Yet our Saviour conſtituted a ſtanding Miniſtry, whom he has promiſed *to be with to the end of the world*, (Mat. 28. 18, 19.). And S. *Paul* tells us that when our bleſſed Lord aſcended up on high, he conſtituted in his ſtead, to continue his Office of teaching, and preſiding over, his Church, ſome *Apoſtles*, *ſome Prophets*, *ſome Evangeliſts*, *ſome Paſtors and Teachers*; ſeveral orders and degrees of men ſuitable to Ages, and various Imployments, to preſerve the Inſtitutions, Doctrines, and order of the Goſpel; *for the perfecting of the Saints*; *for the work of the Miniſtry*; *for the edifying of the body of Chriſt*; To remain ſo long till all that ſhould be gathered out of the ſucceſ-

ſive ages and generations of men, might *come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*, (Epheſ. 4*th.* from the 8*th.* to the 13*th.* Verſe:). Now the eſtabliſhment of ſuch a ſtanding Miniſtry throughout the ages of the Chriſtian Church, which is to endure until the Judgement of the Great day, ſufficiently baffles all expectations of any particular and continued inſpirations, to effect the ſame which the Miniſtry aſſiſted by the received Rule and ordinary conduct of Gods Holy Spirit can well accompliſh; The conſtitution of the one is ſo oppoſite to, and inconſiſtent with the other, that none but madmen can believe both; and none but thoſe that are diſeaſed and Lunatick, can expect inſpiration to ſuch purpoſes, that ever conſidered the conſtitutions of Chriſtianity, it evacuating all the Oeconomy of the Goſpel. (3.) Suppoſe there were ſuch an impulſe or inſpiration to be expected; Yet how ſhould thoſe, who are to be guided by what they that pretend to it deliver, know that they are really inſpired, who ſo con-

confidently conduct and lead the people; ſince they do no real Miracles, nor uſe ſuch convincing arguments, either from the nature of thoſe Principles they propound unto the world, their coherence with any thing already reveal'd, their agreeableneſs to the nature of God, or the welfare of men, to perſuade any reaſonably to embrace them: If it be pretended that the inſpiration it ſelf is a ſufficient authority to him that delivers Principles to the world, and reaſon enough for any to embrace them; Yet, however, the inſpiration muſt ſtill be proved, as it has alwayes been, by Miracles; And thoſe not falſe, but real: Becauſe, otherwiſe, every one, that has confidence and wickedneſs enough to pretend to an impulſe and Call from Heaven, may impoſe what he pleaſes on the world, and they muſt, without examination, believe it: This indeed would be a ready way to render the reaſon of men uſeleſs, and degrade them into the ſilly nature of a Beaſt, that, being bridled and ſadled, is turned which way ſoever the rider pleaſeth: Nay, it would be an extraordinary and new method; as miraculous,

nay more than the pretenders inſpirations, to make the parts of a contradiction both true, if all thoſe who preſume that they are inſpired are to be believed: For nothing can be more apparent to us than that various Sects, oppoſite to one another, diſtant to a total ſeparation, pretend all to be thus inſpired; And if what upon this they preſume to deliver, is to be received by thoſe to whom the meſſage is directed; And they pretend it is directed unto all: How can we, ſince their confidence is equal, know which to adhere to, ſince all come by the ſame authority; And it is impoſſible to receive the opinions of all, becauſe they contradict one another: 'Tis true, we find ſome men among us that have run through all the ſigns of the *Zodiack*, and their want of conſtancy and reſolution, not being directed to the *Pole*, has cauſed them to tremble and ſhake like a Needle through all the points of the Compaſs; Yet this has been by degrees; not at once, but by ſucceſſion: But in the caſe we have now in hand, many pretend to have things revealed, that yet thwart and encounter one another, and all at the ſame time: To em-

embrace, at once, theſe ſeveral propoſitions, is plainly impoſſible; and if we conſider, to make our choice, we are either apparently obſtinate and wilful, when all come with the ſame authority; or elſe we openly forſake the Argument of Inſpiration; and ſtand, and examine theſe Doctrines by a rule; *and inſtead of believing every Spirit*, we *try them*. But if men will, notwithſtanding theſe plain and palpable abſurdities, preſume ſtill to thruſt ſuch wild pretenſions upon the world, and the proof of their Doctrines ſhall be *by* confidence, not argument; I would willingly have them to conſider, as well as our ſelves, what their pretended inſpiration means, and what that impulſe uſually effects upon their own minds; that makes them ſo confident that they are inſpired from above? Can it be ſuppoſed (or do they feel in themſelves) any thing more than their own melancholy, or thoughts brooding to hatch an Opinion? Do they find any more than their perſuaſions heightned, and their aſſurance, of what they were before willing to believe, bold and ſtrong, and thus inflaming them with a zeal to maintain

what inordinate thoughts have produc'd ſtrong reſolutions to propagate in the world? If it be ſo, (as certainly it is) every man who is thus raiſed, will have the ſame authority with another; and oppoſite opinions (which is yet impoſſible) muſt at once be embraced by men, becauſe the authority, upon which their certainty is grounded, is felt by all, though underſtood by neither: And to others there ſeems the ſame confidence and aſſurance in the teachers of theſe different Opinions. Our own reaſon therefore, without an inſpiration, will readily teach us that, ſince the Holy Spirit of God (to an inſpiration from which all theſe ſeveral men pretend) is but one, and what it delivers, alwayes conſiſtent; theſe men cannot be inſpired: But they take their dreams for a converſe with Spirits, their melancholy phancies for inſpirations, the diſeaſes of their bodies for the accompliſhments of their minds, and their own thoughts to be Revelations: And, in ſhort, only think themſelves awaked when they are indeed aſleep. Nay, we may farther raiſe our diſtruſt and boldneſs towards theſe men; Becauſe we know that con-

confidence, assurance, and real belief of what has entred into the minds of men, receive degrees of accession and strength, as well by thought, conversation, and argument, as by any impulse that can be imagined; Nay, many times, subtility, pride, impudence and wilfulness, will maintain a thing with as great eagerness and zeal, as if men had been really inspired. The Devil can do much to heighten mens persuasions; and they may do much to heighten their own; and arguments, that men conjecture to arrive at a compleat demonstration of a point, will make them as tenacious of an opinion (especially where they may appear singular) as any impulse or inspiration. Now in the midst of such perplexing causes, that are able to produce the same effect, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for men, that adhere not to a Rule of trial, to come to a particular and exact determination; and to satisfie either others or themselves to what cause they may attribute the effect.

If they pretend to be able to distinguish betwixt a good and a bad cause, where the effect yet seems to be the same:

ſame: Or to know the cauſe by the different impreſſions, variety of impulſes make upon their Spirits, by which an object is conveyed to their underſtandings; and by a diſtinct method, by which the images of things become figured in the brain: This can be no conviction to others, until it is explained; Nor any to themſelves, unleſs they certainly know, and underſtand it: Which, if they do, they are as well able to expreſs this, as they are the propoſition which, as they pretend, is revealed to them: But I fear this attempt will be in vain: Becauſe I cannot find upon ſtrict conſideration and retirement, but that the motions of the Spirits muſt be always alike; and the ſame percuſſions upon, and convulſions in, the nerves, to cauſe the ſoul to underſtand and believe; whether it be truth, or falſhood that is repreſented, if it be received under the notion of truth; And if the object ſeems to be true, it makes a like impreſſion as if it were ſo: Therefore it is impoſſible for the Enthuſiaſt to diſtinguiſh an inſpiration from God, from a ſuggeſtion by the Devil, if he forſakes th Rule, and the publick ſentiments

timents of good and evil. Therefore we ſee how unreaſonable it is either to be ſtartled with the vain pretences of men, or to give credit *to every Spirit*; ſince, upon ſuch grounds, the *Devil* may be entertained *for an Angel of light*, and the diſcoveries we make, may as well be by the flames of Hell, as by beams darted from the *Sun* in the Firmament.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

NOw from the precedent Diſcourſe, upon the caution of the Apoſtle, I inferr (1.) The unreaſonableneſs of ſuch men, and their lamentable ſtate, who ſhutting their eyes againſt the Sun, create a perpetual night to themſelves, and love to wander in darkneſs and error, by being of ſuch unſteady tempers, ſuch eaſie and unmanly reſolutions; ſhifting Churches and Opinions at every turn, concluding every Apparition to be an Angel of Light, and the dreams of men to be inſpirations; And though principles of various ſhapes and faces are preſented by men with the ſame confidence and pretence of inſpiration: yet too many are ſo inconſiderate and eaſie, as to admit all by a continued ſucceſſion, and live altogether in a circle, as if they were fix'd like one of the Philoſophers intelligences in an Orb, turning it round, and riding them-

themſelves about with it: Or rather chained by ſome Magical charm, that they are condemned to run about the circle, and yet are never able to ſtand ſtill long enough to diſentangle themſelves. And what a diſmal ſtate of life is this, never to poſſeſs reſt and quiet? How pitiable is the condition of a man, that has his mind alwayes toſs'd and ruffled? who has got ſuch a paralytical diſtemper, as keeps his head alwayes jogging; who entertains no principles long, and yet Religion is his perpetual burden: And well may it be ſo to him, who loads himſelf with ſuch variety. Theſe men put a veil over their own eyes, and blindfold themſelves, that they may either be led by others, or ſtumble on they know not whither: Theſe diſcern not truth from falſhood, nor make any difference betwixt opinion and demonſtration; who every day are intangled in the midſt of ſnares and abſurdity, and wander about in a wild wilderneſs, when they think they are travelling through an inhabited Countrey: They are like Fowls flying in the air, who are hamper'd in Nets which others have placed on Poles to catch them,

when

when they think they are mounted above hazard and danger. 'Tis a dreadful Judgement, when God, that gave men ſouls to diſcern, ſhall, for their own wilful blindneſs, deliver them up to the power of deluſion to believe a lye; eſpecially when we ſhall reflect upon what the Apoſtle informs us will be the conſequence: *That they may be damned who believe not the truth:* (*2 Theſſ.2.11.*). We find that this muſt naturally become the effect of ſuch a wild principle: And the experience which we have of the irregularities and crimes of ſuch perſons ſufficiently informs us, that their ways in this world lead down to the Chambers of Death, and in the other to the Vaults of Hell: Unleſs the greateſt Villanies may be conſecrated by ſuch hallowed pretences, and wickedneſs may change its nature, by adding the higheſt degree to it, when men make God the Author of it: Then indeed the Government of Chriſt will quickly be inconſiſtent with that of our Soveraign; the *Kirk* may beat the Throne in pieces, and men may ſnatch away the Kings Crown to cover their own heads withal: And it may be, after

tet a while, an intrenchment on the Triple Crown, to be the Sovereign of three Kingdoms. The diſmal conſequences of ſuch an unreaſonable and looſe opinion, we have no cauſe yet to forget: Or, if they had eſcaped our memories, and were buried in oblivion, the Authors of them, being afraid they ſhould remain hid, will cauſe them to revive by freſh inſtances, that Charity it ſelf may no longer cover them; but their repeated crimes may at once renew and preſerve their Principles. God has permitted the pretenders to theſe new inſpirations, at once almoſt to make a plain diſcovery of themſelves; and yet he ſtrengthens the hands of Authority to obviate the deſigns of both; and has cauſed the Religion of his own Church, taking its meaſures by the rules of the Goſpel, to ſhine when it was almoſt covered with a Cloud; Lift up your eyes then, and behold its glory; Not to envy, but to delight in, it: Always to profeſs ſuch a Faith as is Primitive and Apoſtolical, that delivers no other Principles to the world, but what our Saviour did before, what his Apoſtles commented on, and a Faith that

their

their followers liv'd by: Principles that intrench not upon the rights of Secular Powers, that do not interfere with the juſt and lawful Maxims of State, that give no countenance to ambitious uſurpations, nor any diſturbances to the peace of the world; that are not wild and extravagant, but teach men humanity and obedience; that countenance no cruelties or murders, but rebuke the inordinate appetites of men, give a check to vice, and incourage virtue; that men paſſing the time of their ſojourning here in the fear of God, and juſtice, and charity with their Neighbours, thwarting neither the Prerogative of the King, nor priviledge of the Subject, may die with true peace of conſcience in the favour of God, and gain a compleat *reſt from their labours*, when their gracious diſpoſitions and habits *ſhall be rewarded with eternal glory.* Let us then, having thus fixed our Rules and Doctrines, attended with ſuch ample rewards, continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of this Faith, and contend earneſtly for it; ſince it is *what was formerly delivered to the Saints.* Let not novelties, that drag ſuch vice and irreligion

ligion after them, that begin with Treaſon and end in Blood, be any more named among us with delight; But *let every one that names the name of Chriſt, depart from* ſuch *iniquity*, as turns the world upſide down, and makes its proſelytes the real, and continued, troublers of *Iſrael*, as well as a ſure plague to themſelves; who vex all that give ear to them with the perplexing paſſions of hopes and fears about their eternal happineſs, ſo much, that they loſe all temporal peace themſelves, and ſcare and diſturb other men; whilſt they keep them by their pretended inſpirations in perpetual doubts and uncertainties of mind: For when they endeavour to believe every Spirit, it is very certain, they can believe none, and ſo they abandon Gods Religion and their own peace, and run a round of endleſs perplexities and contradictions.

(2.) From the Apoſtles Caution, and my diſcourſe from it, we may eaſily judge of thoſe perſons, without the pretence of an extraordinary infallibility, that run after every new Doctrine, like weather-cocks are turned with every wind, and follow af-

ter every Light, though it be but *Will with a Wiſp*, or *Jack in a Lanthorn*, that brings them upon Precipices, or leads them into Boggs: Theſe men, having vitiated their ſight, diſpoſed their organs for all impreſſions, and enlarged their eyes by frequent goggles beyond all proportion, that no new object may eſcape them, receive falſe repreſentations of things with the ſame greedineſs that they receive true; and ſo miſtake a Paper-Kite for a wandering Comet, and an enkindled Meteor for a true Star; *Hecuba* is as acceptable to them as *Helen*, and they embrace a Cloud inſtead of *Juno*: To endeavour to fix Principles in them, is but writing on the face of waters; and to endeavour to digeſt the thoughts of theſe into ſtanding propoſitions, is to endeavour to imprint Characters on the Air; you may inſcribe more durable Divinity on the duſt, which every wind drives to and fro; or impreſs more laſting footſteps on the Shore, which the next Tide waſhes away. S. *Jude* tells us, at the 12*th* Verſe of his Epiſtle, that they are *Clouds without water*, without any weight to ballance them, and are not only light as the

Air,

Air, but as inconſtant too. S. *Peter* ſayes, that they are *Wells without water; Clouds that are carried with a tempeſt*; but yet ſuch, *to whom the midſt of darkneſs is reſerved for ever*: (2 *Pet.* 2. *ch.* 17.). Certainly, ſuch men muſt needs be wrong, who, by frequent ſhifting, declare to the world, that they do not know which opinion is right; but, like ſticks and ſtraws, are carried with the ſtream, and alwayes ſwim down with the River: Their faith muſt needs ſtagger, who thus expoſe it to every ſtroke; and certainly he muſt dye and periſh, that with a naked breaſt is willing to receive all the wounds that his adverſaries will give him. If ſuch men are to be deem'd religious, ſober men would become prophane; and if theſe are they that make a Church, the more rational part will enter into a Conventicle, or any place diſtant from theſe. What! muſt a man be a Fool to become a Prophet? or cannot he be ſpiritual, unleſs he be mad? Muſt Religion, that brings peace to the world, be the only bone of contention among men, which they caſt at one anothers heads? Shall that which teaches us

ſelf-denyal, patience, humility, and obedience, be pleaded for a breach of all theſe? Shall our Saviour's Kingdom be of this World, notwithſtanding his own proteſtation to the contrary? Or thoſe that are zealous for the Doctrine of S. *Paul*, propagate it by that Sword which yet S. *Peter* was rebuked for uſing? Will men be bold to aſſume to themſelves the names of Chriſtians, and yet act more cruelties than the *Turks?* Or call the holy *Jeſus* their Maſter, and yet openly violate all his Laws? Can they bow their knees to him, and yet preſently carry him away to be crucified? Can men think it reaſonable, that a faith ſhould be manured with the blood of others, that was planted at firſt in the Martyrdom of Believers? Or can any be ſuppoſed to have received power from on high, to conſtitute our Saviour a divider of inheritances, when he himſelf has refuſed the Office, and gave the perſon a rebuke that deſired him to accept it, by asking him that queſtion (*Luke* 12. 14.): *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* In vain is it for men, deſigning diſturbances in the World, to pretend that they follow the

the commands of Heaven when they knock the Crown of our Saviour againſt their Sovereigns, or fight with one Scepter againſt the other; unleſs they can reach high enough to pull the *Sun* and the *Stars* from the Firmament, that no light may ſhine upon the World; Or void the Goſpel by inſpiration. The Proteſtant world is too wiſe now to be again thus fool'd; Men muſt chuſe a night for ſuch deſigns as theſe, and ſtay, yet, a little longer, if they intend to meet with *Bats* and *Owles*; The age is not dark and melancholy enough to bring in *Monkery* among theſe; nor has ignorance, that Mother of Popiſh devotion, yet ſufficiently prepared our minds to receive the Doctrines of Papiſts, or Enthuſiaſts; Nor are the brains of rational, and ſober men yet beat out, that there may be room for Dreams and Viſions; Nor have we ſo forgotten the Scriptures, as to be guided only by pretended inſpiration, or to be frighted out of our Faith and Principles, by every new and unexpected apparition: Nor are we ſo ignorant of mens devices, as to be baffled out of our Religion by thoſe that are deceived themſelves;

Or to accompliſh deſigns of malice, or ambition, would ſubtily endeavour to impoſe on others. We know the difference betwixt virtue and vice, and have a Rule to judge Doctrines and Preachers by; and know how to judge of thoſe that now pretend to preſent inſpiration, and thoſe that follow ſuch pretenders; And we well hope that we ſhall not twice in the ſame age, be catch'd and entangled in the ſame ſnare; To prevent which diſmal and fatal ruine, permit me (in the laſt place) to exhort you to what I cannot command, with the ſacred Apoſtle; (though the World was then alſo to be gain'd by intreaty, as appears by his kind compellation, *Beloved:* A word that is uſed (I will not ſay practiſed too, by men that love fornication in Religion, and too often without a metaphor) by thoſe who are far different from the ſpirit and life of our Apoſtle; Yea, ſo often, that it takes up time, in their diſcourſes, fills the room of ſence, and is therefore worn out, and, as they manage it, is grown ridiculous:) Yet let me exhort men that are *beloved of the Lord*, and not without reaſon, by me alſo, and all honeſt Chri-

Chriſtians, not *to believe every Spirit:* not to be ſo ſoft and eaſie, when you have received a ſtanding Rule ſo well proved and conveyed to the world, to admit of new Doctrines that contradict it; or to attend perſons that boldly aſſume as if they were inſpired, with an equal confidence as if all were Apoſtles: There are many in the world that from S. *Paul*'s advice *to prove all things*; keep themſelves in the midſt of doubts and perplexities, and never love to travel long, but where Clouds cover the face of Heaven, and attend only to ſuch Doctrines, whoſe darkneſs keeps them in perpetual ignorance, and ſo the ſound is grateful only when it is uncertain; And thus, with them, *to prove all things*, is only to hear without examination, and never *to hold faſt that which is good:* At this rate, a *ravening Wolf* may be received though he has not ſo much as *ſheeps cloathing*, and to be real Worſhippers of an *Aſſes* Head, with which both *Jews* and Primitive Chriſtians were falſly charged, would be a thing of great merit and honour. But ſhall the cauſe of God be any longer a cloak for the malice of the Devil, the infer-

nal Lake be placed in the Skies, or men, that have their wits about them, miſtake the flames of Hell for Heaven? Shall the Devil lead us with as good aſſurance, as if he were an *Angel of light*? Or any walk by ſo looſe a principle, as cannot diſtinguiſh betwixt *falſe Prophets* and *true*? Many men are ſuch ſtrange fataliſts, that they become altogether indifferent in their Choice; and concluding their Fortunes to be written on their foreheads, they care not whether they make any at all: This is an Opinion, which, when in its conſequence purſued, will make thoſe that really eſpouſe it (and with equal reaſon) to be as regardleſs of temporal welfare, as they are of their eternal, and take a great deal of pains and care either to do ill, or nothing at all to any purpoſe: Then indeed men might as ſecurely go into a Peſthouſe, as take the Air, receive fire into their boſoms, and yet never fear burning; One might endeavour to beat a thouſand, and we might run on the points of naked Swords, without more danger of wounds or death, than if we were at quiet in our Beds, or guarded in the midſt of Troops and Armies:

Armies: But whatever courage ſuch ſtrange Principles may ſeem to inſpire men withal; Yet to be ſure they are not breath'd from Heaven, nor inſpired themſelves; Theſe Doctrines may probably make ſtout Soldiers, but never will make a good Chriſtian; Suited indeed they are to ſuch as think a Sword the beſt mean to propagate Religion; which is the reaſon why the *Turk* embraces them: But they thwart and contradict ſuch a Goſpel as brought peace to all who will embrace it, and not propagate its belief, by war or blood, by open force or ſecret conſpiracy: Alas! men had need to be wary, when eternal welfare is in hazard, and endeavour to play their game well, when their own Salvation lies at ſtake. We know, by ſad and woful experience, *that many falſe Prophets are gone abroad into the world*: And ſhall we, ſtill, with an indifferent, though equal, affection purſue all? We may then lodge a *viper in our boſoms*, drink Poyſon inſtead of Potions, ſwallow a Serpent inſtead of a Fiſh, and eat the very ſtones for Bread: we may thus ſafely halt betwixt two opinions, and be both for *God* and *Baal*; *Chriſt* and *Mammon* may become equal, and it will

will be no matter what we worſhip, ſo as we worſhip any thing at all. But, 'tis a plain ſign of a wanton palate that muſt be taſting every diſh: And when the *Manna* is ſet before us, 'tis evident that we loath it if we deſire *Quails*: If the meſſengers of Sathan may transform themſelves into the Miniſters of the Goſpel, as well as the Devil into an *Angel of light*; we had need to view men before we entertain them, and examine Doctrines before we receive them. Will any rational and wiſe man venture on a precipice without neceſſity? or take pleaſure in ſuch hazard to have the vanity and glory of relating it, when one ſlip proves irrecoverable, and his fall bruiſes him all to pieces? And yet this is the ſtate of thoſe men who, at all adventures, attend the fancies and imaginations of others, or without trial receive their own; They are like perſons travelling in a Wood, who may ſooner meet with Beaſts of prey, than any men either to relieve or direct them. How eaſie is it for thoſe that are once out of the way, and travelling on without knowledge or direction, to be either loſt like a man in a Wilderneſs,

or

or run among the Tents of their enemies, or blunder upon that which they have loſt their way to eſcape? They may miſtake *Rome* in the dark to be their own City, and think *Tyber* to be the *Thames*; and may lodge there, if they are thus deluded, when they think they are ſafe in their own Beds: The *Wolves* are now abroad in the World, nay ſuch as will neither be frightned with a Drum, nor yet be charmed and tamed by a Fiddle, or a Pipe. Let not the *Sheep* then approach them, nor the *flock of Chriſt* feed nigh them, leſt the Shepherds themſelves are forced to fly, when they can no longer govern, or defend, them: Thoſe, therefore, that are Baptized into the Chriſtian profeſſion, that have vowed obedience to the inſtitutions of the Goſpel, ought to conſider that their Religion is not now to chuſe; But that they have engaged in the Chriſtian Profeſſion, and are to live according to its directions; And, therefore, are to be ſo far from believing any pretended inſpirations, contrary to theſe Rules, that they muſt abandon them as impious and abominable; their everlaſting welfare depends

pends upon it; and eternity is not a thing to be played with; nor Salvation to be ſtaked at hazard. No zeal, nor confidence, of others muſt ſhake, or alter, our reſolutions; Nor muſt we change upon any extravagant motions of our own: We muſt not like *Barnabas*, (Gal. 2. 13.) be carried away with the diſſimulation of the *Jews*, nor taken with any gaudy Idolatry of the *Gentiles*; but *hold faſt the form of ſound words, and contend with earneſtneſs for that faith which was once delivered unto the Saints:* We muſt adhere to that ſtanding Miniſtry inſtituted by our Saviour, and continued to us through Ages and Generations, *not forſaking the aſſembling our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is*; Becauſe if we thus ſin wilfully, in renouncing our profeſſion, *when we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries*, (Heb. 10. 25.). *For if thoſe that deſpiſed Moſes's Law, died without mercy, under two or three Witneſſes; Of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall they be thought worthy, who tread under*

under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the Covenant a common thing, and by their wilful revolt, do deſpite to the Spirit of Grace? S. *Paul* tells us that *Chriſt is the head of the Church*, (the reſt are only ſubordinate unto him) *from whom the whole body fitly join'd together, maketh increaſe of the body unto the edifying it ſelf in love*; And therefore he exhorts, *that we be no more children, toſs'd to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lay in wait to deceive* (Epheſ. 4. 14, *&c.*). And ſhall we, to whom our Faith is Ancient, be more eaſie to be drawn away, than they who had but newly received it? God forbid that we ſhould ſo diſgrace our profeſſion, when they that are engaged in a falſe opinion, can die reſolutely, though not for this only, yet without renouncing it: If they do much upon principles of honour, ſhall not we do more upon thoſe of Religion? Shall we that have been bred into ſetled Maximes, be drawn aſide by a mad-man or a fool, if he is but able to pronounce inſpiration? This is the way to entertain any Doctrines of men,

men, though never ſo wild, if they will be ſo hardy as to ſuffer for them, and to take the pack of a common Pedler, for the burden of the Lord, if we find him to ſtoop and crouch under it: Thus we may be *carried by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs*, and take him for an *Angel that miniſters to us*: But we are ſufficiently cautioned againſt ſuch miſtakes, if we will but follow the directions of the Scriptures: For our Saviour has cautioned us againſt *falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets*; and the Author to the *Hebrews*, adviſes men, *that they ſhould not be carried about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines; becauſe it is a good thing that the hearts be eſtabliſhed with grace*, (*i. e.* the Goſpel) *Heb.* 13. 9. And we had need all of us to receive it, and be exceeding cautious and wary in this; to gueſs at *Wolves* by their howling and devouring, let their cloathing be what it will; that no ſubtilty may circumvent us, nor creeping into houſes, *lead the ſilly women captive*; nor cauſe us to ſtray after them. We know the Devil is both cunning and diligent, and that he ſuits his temptations to the various intereſts and diſpoſitions of men; that *he*

walks

walks about like a roaring Lion, but 'tis only to ſeek whom he may devour, (1 Pet. 5. 8.). The *Scribes* and *Phariſees* were pains-taking men; *For they compaſſed Sea and Land to make a proſelyte; but when they had made him, he became twice more the child of Hell than themſelves:* (Matth. 23. 15.). Let us not, then, under the pretence of new diſcoveries, *forſake that which has been from the beginning; but let the ſame mind be in us, which was in Chriſt Jeſus*; and according to S. *Pauls* advice, (*Rom.* 16. 17, 18.) *Let us mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the Doctrine we have learned, and avoid them; becauſe they are ſuch as ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and by good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple. Then* (as it follows) *the God of peace ſhall bruiſe Sathan under our feet ſhortly.* Let us live in that unity, which our holy Religion preſcribes to us, not raiſe or abett diſturbances in the world, but endeavour to fulfil S. *Pauls* joy, and make our Miniſters task eaſie, *in being like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, and of one judgement; that nothing be done through ſtrife, or vain*

glory,

glory, (Philip. 2. at the beginning.). For if we are drawn, by hearkening to the various pretences of men, that yet account themſelves inſpired, to be alwayes biting and devouring one another, we ſhall be conſumed one of another: And this we are not only in our own age taught by experience; but the Apoſtle has long ago admoniſhed men of this, (*Gal.* 5. 15.). *Let us live, therefore, like thoſe that have profeſſed rules of faith, and converſation; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:* And then, if we thus live in this world, we ſhall be entertained in the glory of the next.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

HAving thus diſcours'd the Apoſtles Caution, and evidenced to you, that every one that pretends to Revelation, is not to be believ'd: I proceed to the ſecond particular I propounded, which contains a Direction, how we may diſentangle our ſelves from thoſe perplexities, and different opinions, that various men, under the ſame pretenſion, puzzle us withal. *But try the Spirits whether they are of God.* Now as this is a metaphorical expreſſion, taken from thoſe who bring Metals to the Touchſtone, that they may diſcern the difference betwixt them, that they may be able to value them proportionably to their worth: So *to try the Spirits*, is to examine the Doctrines that ſuch pretenders deliver to the world, and to diſcern betwixt true and falſe; and accordingly *judge whether they are from God or no.* It was the duty of the Prieſts under the Law,

to ſhew the people the difference betwixt *holy* and *prophane*, and to cauſe men to diſcern betwixt *the clean and the unclean*, (Ezek.44.23.). And the duty is continued under the Goſpel, in relation to the Doctrines and pretenſions of men. For as our Saviour foretold, that many falſe Prophets would ariſe in his Name, with pretenſions to his power and authority, ſo we find them too ſuddenly after this prediction to have gone abroad into the World: and even yet continuing their boldneſs and impiety, dividing the Church, and not only troubling particular men, but whole Societies, overturning Thrones, diſſolving Government amongſt mankind, and raiſing confuſions, not only in Secular, but Religious affairs: To prevent therefore ſuch unſufferable diſturbances, that Religion may not cover malice or ambition, nor give any countenance to the humours or impieties of men, we muſt endeavour to preſerve this entire without any mixtures of villany or impoſture, and by ſome certain characters know what properly belongs to it, that we may not lye open to the fancies or deſigns of thoſe who cunningly ruine

our principles and profeſſion. And, ſince new Lights are continually expoſed to the view of men, which they too eaſily gaze at till their eyes are dazled, we muſt endeavour to diſtinguiſh theſe blazing Comets from the true and fixed Stars in the Firmament, by which we are to be guided on Earth, and directed in our way to Heaven: We muſt try both Doctrines and thoſe that publiſh them, *whether they are of God, becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world.* If you will take an old Apoſtles advice againſt the pretended infallibility of new, he adviſes you, *to prove all things, but ſtill to hold faſt that which is good:* (1 *Theſſ.* 5. 21.) We muſt try the Doctrines, Opinions, Examples, nay, even the Actions of all pretenders to revelation; (*for by their fruits ye ſhall know them*, ſayes our Saviour). And what we call Tender Conſciences, as well as thoſe that are very raw, being rubb'd often by reaſon of their former commiſſions, when they are not guided by a well balanced judgement, are moſt apt to have ſecret combats within themſelves, and to be ſenſible of the leaſt touch upon them:

For the beſt things in this World have ſome inconvenience ſtill attending them; and that which in ſome caſes is good, with other circumſtances becomes evil; and moſt men that have an itch upon their ears, have had a ſcab firſt upon their minds. The beſt Gold is moſt ductile, and a Tender Conſcience, if the judgement be not the governour of the affections, is eaſily enſlaved to ſuch principles as ſuit with paſſion, and make impreſſions on the temperaments and bodily diſpoſitions of men: A ſeal we know makes the faireſt and moſt laſting impreſſion upon ſuch Wax as is firſt ſoftned, and a tender Conſcience, where the head is as ſoft as the paſſions plyable, eaſily receives the next Image, though to the blotting out and defacing the old: We had need therefore, when any man comes under a pretence of ſome new inſpiration, to examine well both the perſon and his doctrine, and receive to our own the skill of others, eſpecially thoſe whom God has ſet over us in the Lord; we may otherwiſe forſake the true *Iſrael*, when *Ephraim* and *Manaſſeh* ſhall combine together, or ſingly encounter it. And we have

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been lately (and are not yet out of danger) ſo vex'd with parties different from one another, whilſt one extreme rides the other, that the caution againſt *believing every Spirit*, cannot too often be repeated, nor our trial of all Preachers and Doctrines be too frequently urged and practiſed. Our Saviour gives his Diſciples a caution (who yet had the view of thoſe Miracles which we only believe) *that they ſhould take heed that no man deceive them*, (Mat. 24. 4.): that they might not entertain a ſecret enemy inſtead of a boſom friend; And certainly we have much more reaſon to beware now, although there were falſe pretenders then: For if they durſt, when our Saviour was in the world, deſign the ſubverſion of his Goſpel, when his infinite underſtanding could baffle their arguments, and his viſible Miracles, rebuke their folly in ſetting up any Doctrine for Divine, that contradicted what he delivered; certainly much more now, when the Goſpel is delivered, and Miracles for its confirmation are ceaſed; And men are not now to expect new, but to believe the old: Nay, when the Goſpel it ſelf is

often perverted to evil deſigns, and under a pretence of mens Offering to God, they Sacrifice to the Devil. The Church is now, and our Religion in it, like a Ship at Sea, toſs'd in a ſtorm, and, through the Providence of God, we are put into a Creek to careen and repair; Let us examine, therefore, all the leaky parts of the Veſſel, and ſupply all the defects of Maſts, or rigging before we put to Sea again; And mind what Paſſengers we take in, that they may neither blow us up, nor ſink us. As the Apoſtle warns the *Epheſians*, ſo muſt I admoniſh you, *that no man deceive you with vain words*, (Epheſ. 5. 6.). As if any wickedneſs, by what authority ſoever coloured, could free thoſe who teach or practiſe it, from the revenge of Heaven; *For becauſe of theſe things* (ſaies the Apoſtle) *cometh the wrath of God on the children of diſobedience*. Here indeed, in this world, good men frequently ſuffer the ſame temporal evils with the bad; Becauſe, being in the ſame community, and the offence being that of the whole Society, when the greater part become vicious, the Wheat is ſindged by thoſe flames that burn

burn the chaff; For the ſeparation of theſe is not compleated till a future ſtate renders juſtice exact and glorious: And communities muſt be puniſhed here, becauſe in the other life theſe ſhall ceaſe, and every man bear his own burden. It becomes us therefore, (ſince we muſt every one then anſwer for our ſelves) to examine well our belief and practice; and not to deceive our own ſouls in being led by the falſe principles of another: Hence is it that S. *Paul* adviſes, *that every man examine himſelf before he partakes at the Lords Table*, (1 Cor. 11. 28.). And in the ſecond *Epiſt.* 13*th Chap.* 5*th verſ.* he exhorts men *to examine themſelves whether they are in the faith, and to prove their own ſelves*: And that a man *ſhould try his own work, that he may have rejoycing in himſelf alone, and not in another; Becauſe every one ſhall bear his own burthen*, (Gal. 6. 4, 5.). But yet becauſe many things in Religion, are placed beyond the examination of every man, whoſe duty 'tis to embrace them; I muſt here lay down ſome directions, and rules to limit ſuch as may be otherwiſe apt to be extravagant, and extend this duty of *trying Spirits*,

beyond their own power and capacity. And (1.) We that discourse of the Christian Religion, and are fully convinced that it is true, must take it as it is expressed to the world, in those Books of Scripture in which it is contained; Now these acquaint us that there are some set apart to be Guides to others, and therefore distinguish the Church, into *Pastors and people*; Into those that are *Guides*, and those that *are to be conducted by them*; Into *learned* and *unlearned*: But because all rules guide men no farther than they are designed; To render these proper and effectual, all collateral and subordinate helps are to be used in the application of the Rule: We must take, therefore, the help of the Learned, and rely on their honesty, and skill, in those things which an inferiour Education (without such Miracles as are not now reasonably to be expected) cannot capacitate men to reach; Nor can they pass a judgement upon those things which they have not the advantage of knowing. Thus, that the Scriptures are truly Translated, must be taken for granted by those that cannot understand the Originals; And the Books

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which we receive, as the Rule of Faith, and directions for mens lives, muſt be ſuppoſed to have been written by thoſe inſpired men, whoſe names they bear, among thoſe that have not leiſure nor skill enough to prove them to be ſo by any argument or authority. And when theſe principles are ſetled, (2.) The Scriptures having ſome points more difficult to be underſtood; we muſt, farther, make uſe of our Guides, and thoſe whom our Saviour has appointed over us to interpret to us ſuch points in Religion which we are not capable of unriddling our ſelves; and not adventure above our ſtrength in judging things which we have not learned: This becomes the natural modeſty of mankind, and is more eſpecially agreeable to that humility of mind, and thoſe docile diſpoſitions which become the Goſpel: The contrary humours and actions of men are what make ſo many Schiſms in the Church, and lay them open to the errors and impoſtures of thoſe who, out of ignorance or deſign, eaſily prevail upon, and lead, the ſimple. In plain things (ſuch as moſt of the duties of Religion are) every man of

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an ordinary capacity may well be able to judge for himſelf: But if they will enter into Controverſie, eſpecially ſuch as have puzled the learned, 'tis no wonder that they are led into miſtakes, and their own obſtinacy added to their ignorance, makes their error become an Hereſie: Or if men will proceed in thoſe things, of which they might be capable of underſtanding, by falſe meaſures and courſes which are irregular, not relying, at all, on thoſe helps and aids which reaſon dictates, and God hath both appointed, and allowed; 'Tis no wonder then that they impoſe upon themſelves by falſe reaſoning inſtead of true; or that they may be fit to receive the impreſſions of others when deſigning men impoſe upon them by any fallacious and alluring pretenſions. (3.) Even in plain caſes, when private men, that are not diſtinguiſhed by any publick character, judge for themſelves, they ought to confine their opinions to themſelves, and permit them only to have an influence on their own actions, they having no more power to impoſe them on others, than other private men have

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to impoſe theirs on them. For all private men being in this reſpect equal, none has authority to trouble others; but they muſt leave them to their own reaſon and choice, which is the ſame liberty that they claim themſelves, by vertue of the natural priviledge of men. (4) It muſt be ſuppoſed antecedently to the trial of the Doctrines of men, that pretend to inſpiration, that under the ſame claim and title, *ſome are true*, and *ſome falſe*; For if all were true, there would be no need of *trying Spirits*; But we muſt, contrary to the Apoſtles caution, believe all who confidently affirm that they are inſpired from above: Yet our own experience ſufficiently informs us, that oppoſite Doctrines at the ſame time have been, and are ſtill, vented in the world, with the ſame confidence, with the ſame pretenſion; And we know that the parts of a contradiction cannot, at the ſame time, be true; And, therefore, one being falſe, muſt by ſearch and trial be differenced from the other; that men may diſcern what Doctrines immediately oblige them, being ſtamp'd with Divine authority; And what are to

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be rejected by them, being either the product of the dispositions of mens bodies, or evil projects and designs of men; Or else such as enter into them by the subtilty, power, or injections of the Devil. Now these things being thus stated; I proceed plainly to prove that it is the duty of every man to try and examine all pretenders to inspiration, whether they are of God or no, before they receive and entertain them as such. (2.) Give you some Directions how to know when any Prophet pretending to inspiration, comes from God: And (3) Make some application of the whole, because the expression and Doctrine is very useful.

First, Then, to prove that it is our general duty to examine these pretended inspirations will appear, (1.) Not only from the Apostles direction, which, to those that own S. *Johns* authority, is sufficient to inforce the duty, without any argument or reason for the thing; But also it is the great reason of giving rules to be the measure of what is straight or crooked; This is the general design of Laws, and those innate notions of virtue and vice

vice implanted in the minds of rational men, and conferr'd upon them with their very beings. And this is the reason of *Gods manifesting his will to the world*, that by it men may be able to direct their lives, and regulate their belief, so as to preserve order and peace here, and procure to them happiness hereafter. Now to what purpose should these things be, were it not mens duty to examine things in Religion by them, since the revelation of Gods will to any creatures is a sufficient reason why they should obey it, and is to be the rule of their actions, for that time in which it is ordained to oblige.

Secondly, It is the duty of men to examine Doctrines, *whether they are of God*; Because, in things of a more inferiour concernment, it is not allowed reasonable among mankind to receive or embrace them without trial, and judgment upon them. No man will deal in the commodities of his trade, without either viewing them himself, or taking them on the skill and integrity of one whom he can trust, and confide in: None receives a summ of money, but that he will

will both number and examine the Coin; That ſo his goods may be proportionable to the price; And the Coin he receives may appear to be true, and not counterfeit. If we find a Quotation out of a Book, on which is concluded matter of moment; we will, before we ſettle our notion and belief, examine the Author on whoſe authority the caſe depends; Whether he is of ſufficient credit to inforce that thing; and whether he be rightly quoted and repreſented? Mankind would otherwiſe continually be impoſed upon; They might receive poyſon inſtead of food, and be placed here in this World only to be cheated and deceived; and enjoy their lives at greater hazards than the moſt inferiour Beaſt that periſhes. Things that are obvious to our outward ſenſes, may, by their likeneſs to one another, or an artificial varniſh, many times, deceive us; ſo that what our eyes behold, they cannot ſee: And may not the inward ſenſes of our minds, by methods that are conformable to our faculties, be cheated by various and falſe repreſentations? Theſe things we have repeated

ted experience of, and they need not any farther illuſtration. If therefore, in our temporal concerns there is ſo great occaſion of warineſs and obſervation; Have we not need to be more cautious in relation to ſpiritual, and the matters of religion? Or do we think our bodies ſuperiour to our ſouls; or things temporal, to be of greater advantage, than thoſe that are eternal? If not; it is evident, that we muſt uſe trial in both; and our diligence muſt be advanced ſuitable to the dignity and value of our concern. Our Saviour uſes ſuch an example (from any I cannot take a better) when he rebukes the Scribes and Phariſees, that were ſo preciſe and ſcrupulous about ſmaller matters; Who could *ſtrain at a Gnat*, but yet *ſwallow a Camel*: that could exactly obſerve the outward face and appearance of the Heavens; but would not take notice of the reverſe, which was yet more to be conſidered by men; They could gueſs at the weather by rule and obſervation; But would not *diſcern the ſigns of the times*, neither in relation to the coming of the *Meſſiah*, nor the ſafety, or deſtruction, of *Jeruſalem*, (*Matth.* 16. 2, 3.).

2, 2.). And is it not strange, after so solemn a rebuke, that men, professing faith in the reprover, should yet run into the same error, and not examine a business that is of the greatest concernment, when, yet, they will be extreamly diligent, in what is of a far less value? Alas! what is time, in comparison of eternity? Or our abode here, when set in opposition to what state we shall be in hereafter? There is no comparison at all betwixt them; And, therefore, we ought to be much more inquisitive about what we receive for Doctrines, either to be believed, or practised (since on them depends our eternal welfare), than we should be for the greatest concernments of this world; Which if they dye not, and perish with the using, and make themselves wings, that they may fly away; Yet a very small time shall determine their use, as to us: And then, according to our espousals and practice of Religion, we must enter into eternal bliss, or misery.

Thirdly, It is our duty to try the Spirits, because the examination of the Doctrines and Opinions of men, in Gods name vented to the world, is approved

proved and commended in Sacred Writ. As the Womans Alabaſter Box of Ointment is recorded in the Scripture, that this perſons piety and kindneſs to our Saviour might not eſcape the notice of poſterity; But whereſoevet the Goſpel ſhould be preached in the world, this action ſhould be told for a memorial of her, (*Matth.* 26. 13.): So we want not ſuch examples, and approbations of them, as may recommend the diligence and inquiries of men, before they receive principles under pretence of inſpiration, to all poſterity to read and imitate: Thus the *Bereans* were accounted *More Noble* by S. *Paul*, than than thoſe of *Theſſalonica*; becauſe, when the Goſpel was preached to them, they did not receive it at all adventures, but examined, whether the relations agreed with the predictions of the Prophets, and the rules of life were coherent with the principles of Humane Nature, the Being and Attributes of Almighty God, the Notions and Reaſon of Mankind; But, more eſpecially with the Scriptures which they had already received: Which they ſearched daily, that they might

by them be enabled to know, whether the Doctrines delivered were true (*Acts* 17. 11.). Had God appointed any infallible Judge upon earth, or reſolved alwayes to fix his Laws in the minds of men by any new authorized revelations, or any particular and extraordinary diſcoveries: As there would not have been need of any ſtanding Rule; ſo the Apoſtle would not have commended theſe Jews for comparing the New Teſtament with the Old, nor for ſearching the Scriptures, to know whether the Apoſtles Doctrine was true, ſince he came to preach by virtue of inſpiration.

Fourthly, 'Tis our duty to try the Spirits, that is, to examine the Doctrines and Opinions of thoſe who pretend to be guided and acted by the Spirit; Becauſe there are ſeveral advantages that accrew to men by a diligent examination of theſe things. As (1.) It is the only way to avoid the inſinuations of thoſe, who, under this pretence, captivate and enſlave the affections of many, leading them into a falſe Religion, and deceiving them of the priviledges and rewards of the Goſpel:

Goſpel; And ſo their peace and happineſs is diſſolved here, and they purchaſe eternal miſery hereafter. The taking away this liberty of enquiring from men, is what ſupports the Church of *Rome*, when having deprived men of their ſight, they lead them which way they pleaſe; and ſpirit them into the chambers of death, when they think they are going to the land of the living: This is what cauſes many to believe the Prieſts gain to be their own godlineſs, whilſt ignorance begets a ſtrange devotion; and inſtead of being lead by the Spirit of God, they are hurried away by that of deluſion: And then *Egypt* or a Wilderneſs will be as pleaſant as the Land of *Canaan*, and the Night become as glorious as the Day, to ſuch as have no eyes to ſee it. The want of tryal and examination of theſe things, makes the Sects, among our ſelves, to be catched and halter'd by the ſubtilty of others, till they are betrayed into the hands of thoſe, who uſe them as Stalking horſes to catch others, till the Jeſuits caſt their Net over them, and then the *Romans* come, and take away our Kingdom. To forbid this tryal and

judgement of things, is to render the faculties of a man uſeleſs, to degrade him into the nature of a Beaſt, and to bring a ſtrange *Metempſychoſis* amongſt us, by tranſplanting mens ſouls into other creatures, whilſt their bodies live, and act in the world: Or to make them, in religious affairs, (which are the greateſt concernments they have here) to forſake the Law of God, and the Teſtimony, to ſeek unto them that have familiar Spirits: Or, *unto the Wizzards, that peep, and mutter; when a people ſhould ſeek unto their God, and not for the living to the dead,* (Iſa. 8. 19.).

(2.) By a ſerious tryal and examination of the Doctrines of men that pretend to inſpiration, we ſhall, in all probability, keep our faith ſound and entire: For there being, among Chriſtians, but one true Faith as well as Baptiſm, and one God the Father of our Lord Jeſus; Since there may be many Articles of Belief exhibited to men different from the true; It muſt needs become the only means to keep our faith ſound and blameleſs, by examining things before we receive them, and trying men that pretend to in-

inſpiration, before we entertain their Doctrines in our minds, or make them the objects of our belief. A Ship that equally ſpreads her Sails to all the Storms and contrary Winds, muſt not only lengthen her Voyage, and be toſs'd in the midſt of the Waves and Tempeſt; But frequently be in danger of a Wreck, if it be not loſt and overwhelmed. There is no leſs hazard in the matters of our faith: If we permit it, without care, to lay open to every wind of doctrine, we may then not only be toſs'd to and fro, but at once make ſhipwrack of faith and a good conſcience. The Devil is both a Thief and a Murtherer; ſo he was from the beginning; and ſtill walks about as a roaring Lyon, ſeeking whom he may devour: And how eaſie is it for him to enter the minds of men, and to ſteal away their faith, or hinder it from a vital influence upon their actions, if the doors of their ſouls continually are open, and are not at all lock'd or barr'd? He may then come to us in his own ſhape, without transforming himſelf into an Angel of light; and both ſolicite and enſlave our minds, whilſt we let him

paſs without examining: And yet, in Ports ſubject to invaſion, and Garriſons that may be capable of ſurprize, we allow continual Watch and Ward; and Orders to them are ſo ſtrict in time of danger, that none, who is not publickly known to be a friend, may enter without a ſtrict examination, leſt he betray the place, and let in the enemy: No leſs advantage is it to the mind, to preſerve our faith ſpotleſs and unblemiſh'd, to have a Sentinel alwayes at our Senſes, through which our ſouls make their ſallies; leſt the adverſary again enters with them, and they are deſtroyed by the ſame way in which they hoped to preſerve themſelves: We muſt guard our minds, and have a watchman alwayes upon the Tower, that our underſtandings themſelves which govern both our choice and affections be not enſnared into falſe principles, which will defile our actions, and ruine our ſouls. This is the way to *keep our ſelves harmleſs and undefiled, the ſons of God in the midſt of that crooked and perverſe generation amongſt whom we live; and hereafter to ſhine like Stars in the midſt of the Firmament*

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for ever. This is the deſign of Saint *Paul's* exhorting men *to hold faſt the form of ſound words,* (2 *Tim.* 1. 13.); and of his thanking God, *that the* Romans *then* (though ſince they have departed from it) *obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to them:* (*Rom.* 6. 17.); and of S. *Jude's* exhorting all Chriſtians *to contend earneſtly for that faith which was once delivered unto the Saints:* (in the third Verſe of his Epiſtle.). For, whatever any men boldly ſay, we have as much reaſon to examine our belief, as our actions, and to take as great care of the principles, as we do in the practice, of our Religion: For not only our reaſon concludes this, becauſe the underſtandings are the principal faculty of our ſouls; But for that theſe direct our wills, and influence all the actions of our lives: And God will not accept of thoſe, who exchange their Creed for any publick faith, that betrayes thoſe Articles men ſhould believe; Safety or ruine depends upon it; Becauſe not only Baptiſm and the outward Ordinances of our Saviours inſtitution, are required to the ordinary ſalvation of men; But *he that be-*

lieveth not ſhall be damned, (Mark 16. 16.). *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, not minding theſe things, put away Faith and a good conſcience, and ſhipwrack'd their belief in the midſt of error; and for this, *they were delivered unto Sathan*, (1 Tim. 1. 19, 20.). If the Orthodoxy of mens judgments and opinions of things, were not of great and eternal concernment in the times of the Goſpel, the old ſtatutes might be ſtill embraced, or the Law of Nature remain the only direction unto men, without any farther revelation: But S. *Peter* tells us of errors that are damnable, *which entitle men unto ſwift deſtruction*, (2 Pet. 2. 1.). And, if there were not great caution to be uſed in relation to mens Principles and Belief, Faith would not have been made the condition of the Goſpel, nor the qualification to juſtifie a ſinner.

(3.) By a ſtrict examination of Principles and Doctrines, we may preſerve the peace of our own conſciences; For if conſcience in things pertaining to Religion, conſiſts in the agreement of our notions, with the will of God revealed unto men; Then the trial of Opi-

Opinions (under whatever pretence they ſeem to be conveyed) by this rule, and accordingly either rejecting or receiving them, muſt much conduce to the peace and quiet of our own minds, which are regulated by the ſame rule, by which we examine Doctrines and Opinions. And can there be a greater advantage to men on Earth, than full ſatisfaction, and a quiet conſcience, ſettled upon an unalterable and firm foundation? Contentment, in the enjoyments of this world, is that which makes the meaneſt Peaſant as happy as his Prince, and creates a level amongſt mankind; How much greater delight then muſt that ſatisfaction advance men to, which relates to things of an everlaſting concernment, that cauſes the pangs of death ro vaniſh, and the fears of Hell and torment to depart; that carries us with all ſteadineſs and peace, through all the billows and ſtorms of the World, into that bleſſed Haven of reſt and tranquillity, where we ſhall know no trouble any more? This is enjoying a perpetual Feaſt, a pleaſure beyond the greateſt ſenſuality, exceeding what men can otherwiſe poſſeſs,

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or as much as invent or think upon: For what are then all the concernments or advantages of the world, when in matters of Religion I am fix'd and ſetled? If I live in miſery, it cannot be long; nature will ſoon have ſpun her thread, if no accident cuts it off; And if, having my Religion fixed upon ſuch Principles which cannot deceive me, I regulate my actions by their directions, death muſt then be welcome to me, becauſe it gives me the fruits of my hope, and enters me into the joy of my Maſter, who from earth (having ſuffered an antecedent ſeparation of ſoul and body) entered viſibly into his own glory, and has made a paſſage to the ſame for thoſe who live in the belief of what he has revealed, and the practice of that Religion which, in fulneſs of faith and indiſputable aſſurance, they have had a well grounded confidence in.

(4.) This trial and examination of the Doctrines and Opinions of others, will make men endeavour to live without diſturbance in that Society of which they are members. Nothing diſturbs the Government of the world ſo much, as doubtings and diſputes

putes about Religion: But this, when found out by a regular enquiry, and truly eſtabliſhed in the minds of men, gives the greateſt and moſt effectual checks to all the breaches made upon encloſures, and thoſe irregularities and invaſions that are committed upon the properties of men: This forbids the Prince to be a Tyrant, and admoniſhes the Subjects to be obedient to the Laws; to become Subject for *conſcience ſake, and not to rebel againſt the powers of this world, leſt they receive damnation in the next*, (Rom. 13.). But when men are apt to entertain the furious Principles of others, when conveyed to them under the ſpecious pretence of Spirit, and inſpiration; With what eaſe are they enſnared, when they are either lazy, or refuſe to examine? There is nothing then ſo ruinous to Society: nothing that puts men more into confuſion; nothing that diſſolves the bands of Community, and breaks Order into a *Chaos*, but they will attempt under the covert of Religion; and conclude they do ſervice unto God, when they are immediately offering to the Devil: For, the ſence of Religion being the greateſt tye upon mankind;

kind; what will they not attempt or ſuffer, when their actions, let them be never ſo full of villany, ſhall under pretence of the authority, or inſpirations, of others, be adopted into the number of vertues, and heroick acts, and their ſufferings be advanced to Martyrdom? Juſtice ſhall be violated, when it ſhall be the act of Religion, to gain a Crown from the head of him that rightly wears it; And then they will make a way to the accompliſhment of their deſign, though they pave it throughout with the carkaſſes of the ſlain. But if ſuch Principles, that ruine Religion under its name are well examined, and ſubmitted to the trial of reaſon and the Scriptures; and new inſpirations are meaſured by thoſe that are old: We ſhall eaſily conclude that ſuch a Doctrine cannot come from God, that teaches men to do the works of the Devil; nor the Principles that tend to confuſion among mankind, ever proceed from a God of Order; But they are, upon the firſt audit, to be damn'd to the place from whence they took their original, and muſt be concluded to come from Hell, which thus fire and conſume the world. And

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ſo you ſee that the ſeveral advantages, which accrew to men upon trial of thoſe that pretend to inſpiration, may be ſo many incouragements to the thing; and ſo many arguments to recommend the duty to all thoſe who, by the Devil and his agents, do not love to be led captive.

Finally, To what purpoſe were faculties given to us that are able to judge, and, according to judgment, to make our choice in matters of Religion, if by a pretence of any ones inſpiration, the natural powers of our ſouls muſt ceaſe, or elſe be rendred uſeleſs; They being ſuſpended by a pretenſion of authority that, without examination, cannot appear to us to be Divine? Nay, why ſhould the Apoſtle impoſe ſuch a task upon us, which, without the uſe of every mans particular faculties, becomes impoſſible? No choice will then be left in Religion to the generality of men; But it will become a neceſſary thing; and we are bound, like machins, to move alwayes by the impulſe of another; nay quite contrary, to what we were obliged before, if the pretender to inſpiration change his note, and plaves

playes to us on a contrary ſtring. Would it not be ſtrange for any man to preach to, and exhort, ſtones; Or argue to one that were not capable of any impreſſion? Or could S. *John* be ſo unreaſonable as to impoſe the *trial of Spirits* on men that either have no faculties to examine, or have their ſenſes tied up by a ſuperiour power? Muſt all *falſe Prophets* be rejected; and is there a neceſſity of mens believing what Doctrines have been revealed from Heaven; and muſt they not yet *try the Spirits*, and uſe their own faculties to examine them? To deny this may indeed be ſuitable to ſome Doctrines of the Church of *Rome*; Yet it cannot but be plain to a Proteſtant; or any other reaſonable man, that has not his faculties given him in vain; that ſuch arguing, and ſuch belief ſerve only to juſtifie impoſture under the pretence of truth, and to blind mens eyes, that they may be led into a ditch; This is to make fools of others, that they that cheat them may be accounted wiſe; and thoſe, who are thus impoſed upon, diſclaim the uſe of their own reaſon, and have eyes of their own, but ſee not; which is all one as

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to have none at all: And it muſt appear very ſtrange, that any man, having a clear ſight, ſhould yet refuſe to guide himſelf, but chuſe to be led about like a Dog in a Halter.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THere is yet one Argument more why we ſhould try and examine Doctrines, that are pretended to be the effects of inſpiration; and that is what the Apoſtle makes the reaſon of his Caution and Direction, *becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world*: Now ſince theſe are many, enough to boaſt the advantage of their number, to the ſtaggering many weak men, and frightening that Authority which ſhould ſuppreſs them, and yet they remain *falſe Prophets*, under what ſpecious pretences ſoever they appear; There is great reaſon why we ſhould *prove* and *try them*, that we may not be led away with the error of the wicked, and extreamly hazard, if not ruine our ſouls. For, in matters of Religion, eſpecially where divers Opinions of the ſame thing are expoſed to us, our firſt buſineſs muſt alwayes be, according to our

our capacity and power to ſettle our minds by a fixed choice of ſuch Principles and fundamentals, of which we have ſuch good aſſurance as may fully convince us that they are true, and not falſe; and according to theſe to direct our lives: Which can never be done without enquiry, and judging, for our ſelves, of thoſe Doctrines that, under pretence of a Divine Authority, are, by any, propounded to our belief. Since, therefore, there are ſo many *falſe Prophets* fluttering in the world, there is reaſon that we ſhould examine and try them; and not believe every one that boldly affirms he came from God; leſt we entertain thieves and robbers, in the room of hearty and honeſt friends; and inſtead of receiving a faithful Guide, we retain one that deludes us out of our way, till at laſt he lodges us in the chambers of Hell, inſtead of carrying us up to Heaven. But ſince no man comes with ſo great a pretence as immediate inſpiration, or to deliver Gods will to the world, but that he will offer ſomething to recommend both himſelf and meſſage; ſince he knows he ſpeaks to men having the

same faculties with himself, who have, at least, their own reason to guide their choice, and cannot, if they are at all considerate, be rash in their entertainment of those Doctrines, wherein their eternal welfare is concerned; It must of necessity quicken our endeavours to try and sift the Doctrines of men to the utmost of our power, and the more because of the plausible Arguments that deceivers insinuate themselves by into the hearts and affections of others; whose poyson may appear wholsom to the eye, that yet gripes and swells the bowels: Amongst many things, therefore, that render *false Prophets* difficult to be discerned, I shall instance in some, that, upon the view of them, and discovery of their deceit, we may use the utmost diligence in our trial, and be the better prepared to entertain those Rules, by which we may discern true inspiration, from that which is false, and only pretended.

First, They will inveigh against the Principles you have already received, and those that are the guides of your souls; As well knowing that a new building cannot be erected on that ground

ground on which another ſtood, without demoliſhing the old, removing the materials, and clearing the foundation: And this they alwayes do in proportion, according to the degrees of alteration which they deſign; till, at laſt perhaps, they introduce among you *golden Calves, inſtead of the worſhip of the God of Iſrael*: And if their enterprize be thus crown'd with a joyful ſucceſs, their language will be like that which we read (1 *King.* 12. 18.). *Behold, O Iſrael, the Gods that brought thee out of the land of Egypt!* and then we muſt with proſtration worſhip them. *Falſe Prophets* will come to you in *ſheeps cloathing*, the *ravening Wolf* ſhall not appear till he has an opportunity *to devour you*: The Principles of theſe would fill us with too much horror and amazement, ſhould they appear all at once, and that before prejudice were removed; They endeavour, therefore, to gain by a gradual advancement upon us; abating the ſtrength of cuſtom and education; firſt ſtartling, and then ſeducing us; uſing methods to invalidate the old, before they ſettle new Principles: Nay, if they can but

make us indifferent betwixt both, either by argument or debauchery, their work then waits only a fitting opportunity: But if the reſiſtance be ſo great that they cannot wholly captivate at once, they will aſſault where we are weakeſt, baffle us by degrees, and introduce one point dependently on another, till at laſt we become wholly theirs, before we are ſenſible of ſo great a change as they by ſucceſſion have wrought among us. 'Tis a vaſt advantage they gain againſt us, if they can but render us lazy in our enquiries, or cauſe us to undervalue our Guides; Which they will never be wanting in, as long as an evil tongue can aſperſe, or ſecret whiſperings can do men injury, who are not preſent to anſwer for themſelves; Nay, as long as boldneſs can confront modeſty; Or men that aſſume not equal advantages, may be either ſworn, or Hector'd, into ſilence. Let theſe deſigning men but once bring your Teachers into contempt, and it will not be long er'e they drive them into corners: The former has been long attempting, and not without conſiderable ſucceſs; God defend us againſt the

the latter, leſt the people are deſtroyed for want of knowledge, and ignorance becomes the Mother of devotion: For we know what ſuch devotion means. Thus was it in our Saviours time; the Jews branded him for an impoſtor and deceiver, that ſo they might argue his Doctrine to be falſe; and rather than own, that his Miracles ſhould prove divine, they blaſphemouſly attributed them to the power of the Devil, (*Matth.* 12. 24.): *And the Servant is not above his Lord*; But the ſame Spirit, that in this manner, diſparaged the Maſter of the houſhold, will not be more kind to the family: but will make us, if he can, as he did the Apoſtles, luſtrating Sacrifices to expiate for the City, and a ſtrange ſpectacle both to Angels and to men.

But (*Secondly*) Theſe projecting men that come to you with inſpired Doctrines, till they kill and ſlay and take poſſeſſion, will gloze over their falſe principles with all poſſible art and cunning; there ſhall be no Treaſon againſt the perſon of a Prince, when it is their pleaſure firſt to depoſe him; and if he come to an un-

timely end, they kill the man but not the King, and all ſhall be, not murder, but, the execution of Juſtice, when they ſentence him by a Church-authority ſuperiour to his own: Rebellion then is a juſt vindication of their own right, and they only break their Sovereigns Scepter, that Chriſts alone may be exalted: The murdering thoſe that have Sacred Characters impreſs'd upon them, is taking him that hindereth, out of the way, and all the uſurping Tyrannies in the world, are exerciſed only to bring in ſuch a bleſſed confuſion, that ambitious men may from the ſpoils of others, build their own Neſts on high, and this ſhall be called, *the ſeating the Lord Jeſus on his Throne*, though his Religion be made their own footſtool: But if they find the eyes of men open, or their ſtomachs too nice to digeſt ſuch hard things as theſe; and that they refuſe to embrace Devils when the flames appear through their thin garments, and they are not cut long enough to hide their cloven feet: They will effect by ſtratagem what they cannot by open force, and an ambuſh ſhall deſtroy what a Field-Army can-

cannot: They will hide their leaven in ſome meaſures of meal, till in the end all is leavened; blend truth and error together, and like the *Gnoſticks*, make a Religious mixture that ſhall have ſomething of the Jew and ſomething of the Chriſtian, that may look like what others profeſs, but ſtill add ſomething of their own, that poyſon may be ſwallowed in a ſweetned potion, where men may take, and yet never taſte it: The *Saducees* could deny the Reſurrection from the dead, and yet adhere to the Books of *Moſes*: The *Phariſees* could admit the Commandments of God, and yet void them by their own Traditions: The *Arrians* could own Chriſt to be the Saviour of the world, and yet grant him only to be a Creature; And the *Socinians* can acknowledge him the Redeemer of mankind, and yet deny him to be a God by nature: And amongſt all theſe, and many more, error is entertain'd for the ſake of thoſe truths that cover it; and, not diſtinguiſhing betwixt the precious and the vile, men often receive them both together: The Papiſts profeſs the Apoſtles Creed, but add as many Articles of their own:

And thoſe that are averſe to theſe, will yet embrace many errors, and are the more eaſily led towards them when they are diſperſed amongſt a great many truths: But when we conſider, that one mouthful of peſtilential Air may infect and deſtroy the man, it is but reaſonable all ſhould be wary in chooſing out wholſom habitations; and ſince a little poyſon may make us ſwell and burſt aſunder, this may be more effectual to deſtroy, than all the food we ſwallow with it can be to ſave and preſerve us in full ſtrength and vigour; and by how much the more difficult it is to diſcern it, the more careful we ought to be.

Thirdly, Falſe Prophets, will be more difficult to be diſcerned, and therefore more ſtrictly to be examined by us, becauſe they will make their erroneous Doctrines to receive a ſeeming countenance from the Scriptures: Theſe are what we own to be our Rule, and by theſe we judge of Doctrines and Opinions, and therefore are unwilling to believe that to be falſe, which many Texts are brought to prove: Thus the Devil tempted

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our Saviour, (*Matth.* 4. 6.), when he would attempt the ruine of mankind, and the diſappointment of our Redeemer; nay, of the whole moſt bleſſed and glorious Trinity, in contriving and carrying on ſuch wonderful providence; by perſwading him to caſt himſelf down from the Pinnacle of the Temple, to make him ſin in the deſtruction of himſelf, and anticipating that death upon the Croſs, by which he was to become our Sacrifice, he might tempt Providence and hazard himſelf: *If thou be the Son of God* (ſayes he) *caſt thy ſelf down; for it is written, He will give his Angels charge over thee, and with their hands they ſhall bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone*; rendering the Text plauſible to his purpoſe, by omitting that part of *keeping him in all his wayes:* But this was ſuch a tryal of skill, as rendered the Devil exceeding fooliſh, becauſe he that knew all things, could not be ignorant of what he had omitted, which was the key to open that promiſe. Yet from this attempt of the Devil upon our Saviour, have the deceivers of mankind throughout all Ages endeavoured

deavoured to insinuate false Doctrines into the belief of others, by bringing Texts of Scripture to prove them: The instances are many and well known to those that are conversant in Books and Writings, or have given themselves the variety and temptation to hear men of different opinion from us: But alas! How easie is it for one of no extraordinary skill, to wrest the Scriptures, both to his own, and others ruine? Nay, S. *Peter* tells us, that it is the common guilt of the unskilful and unlearned: (2 *Epist.* 3. 16.): How much more then may designing men, that by guile endeavour to catch the ignorant, this way impose upon their understandings, by pretending Scripture, to prove and countenance their false opinions: especially among such as admit Texts for the sake of their number, not their weight, and more regard the sound of the words, than the sense which is couched under them? 'Tis no difficult matter to mistake the sense of any Writing, and then to plead it according to our own purpose and design: Nor is it impossible for men to quote divers Texts, that to ignorant men, may, by their sound,

ſound, ſeem to countenance their opinion, that in their true meaning are nothing for them, or elſe confirm a contrary propoſition: This the Papiſts and Diſſenters know; and this we are acquainted with our ſelves, when we view Books whoſe Margins adorn them with multitudes of Texts, which they pretend to prove the ſame thing by, and yet, upon a more ſtrict examination, do not at all make for their purpoſe: And commonly when men multiply theſe beyond neceſſity, to prove what is certainly confirmed by few that are plain and pertinent, their Doctrine is either doubtful or falſe; or elſe they do it to take up time, and fill their diſcourſes which their own barrenneſs cannot ſupply: Becauſe all Scripture, being of Divine Authority, if in any place it be plain and pertinent to the point which it is brought to confirm, one Text is as good as a thouſand; and to quote many, if ſome be impertinent, the whole poſſibly may be ſuſpected: And therefore 'tis not wiſdom to do it, but in points much controverted among Chriſtians; and in thoſe eſpecially for which the argument to prove them

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can be no other than Divine inſtitution.

Fourthly, If *falſe Prophets* cannot find (as they never can, and therefore deal in obſcure places, where the Text is as dark, as the places retired, into which they creep *to lead ſilly women captive*) I ſay if they cannot find plain Scripture to countenance their opinions, they will yet pretend *viſions* and *revelations*; which the perfection of the Scriptures diſallows, nor have they any argument to prove them, beſides confidence and a bold preſumption: Yet ſome are apt frequently to cry *a Viſion from the Lord*, when it is the fruit of their own phancies, whilſt their ſouls dream when their bodies ſleep, or are indiſpoſed whilſt they are awaked: We eaſily know how far the depraved diſpoſitions of our bodies work upon our minds, and how eaſie it is for men, proportionable to their melancholy or joy, to frame different opinions of things: (which by the way renders many ſigns of grace, that ſome men for their own advantage exhibit to the world, altogether vain and deceitful). But, notwithſtanding all theſe things, we find, by too woful an

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experience, how men, either not fixed, or fearful, are prevail'd upon by such pretensions: So that it proves a difficult task to hinder their error, or to reduce them from it. For all former rules, to those that entertain so wild a principle, are set aside; and Reason must not be heard against Revelation: Yet since God is but one, and all Propositions are true or false; since we find different, nay, contrary Opinions vented to the World, under the same pretence, 'tis an argument why we should *prove* and *try them*; and the rather by how much the more difficult true inspiration is to be distinguished from that which is false, and what comes from God to be discern'd from what proceeds from the constitution of our bodies, the variety of objects presented to our sense, or what the Devil injects into our minds, and thereby employes, and captivates our thoughts, and this way frames an Opinion.

Fifthly, *False Prophets* will give accents to what they deliver, with such art and elocution, as may make great impressions on a multitude; and suit their voice to the constitutions of those whom

whom they deſign to delude, with ſuch elevations and cadencies as may agree with the joyful, and the melancholy; as if a man muſt firſt be skill'd in Song, before he is capable to become a Preacher; or a Fidler were in the next capacity to be a *falſe Prophet* to delude the World; But beſides theſe ſuitable percuſſions upon the nerves of men, to make a grateful reception in the underſtanding; They add to it a great deal of their own paſſion, which many miſtake for a true zeal, they can be loud when they are not rational, and what is wanting in ſenſe, they can ſupply by noiſe; and great action ſhall paſs for an argument; and a goggle of the eye for clear demonſtration: They will put their blood and Spirits into ſuch nimble motions, that they will ſeem as if they were raviſhed from themſelves, and the parts of their bodies were juſt running away from one another. This ſtrange fury is called zeal, and many men are apt to receive every thing for true, which is thus recommended by a Religious fury; not thinking that zeal is determined by its object, and according to what

what it is converſant about, becomes either good or bad. With what zealous acclamations and repeated outcries did the *Jews* call for the crucifixion of our Saviour, *whilſt they cried, ſaying, Crucifie him, Crucifie him*; (Luke 23. 21.): and the more *Pilate* endeavoured to releaſe, the more zealous were they to put him to death, and more inſtant in requiring his blood. In this, men of falſe and corrupted Principles exceed thoſe that are poſſeſs'd of true; truth being uſually conveyed with ſimplicity, becauſe reaſon and underſtanding receives and fortifies it; but Error muſt be managed by art and cunning, becauſe its nature cannot recommend it: We read of men, in the 7th of *Hoſea*, that though they devoured their Kings and Judges, ſtrayed away into the Groves and Woods, from the Worſhip of God to that of an Idol; ſo that none (ſayes God) *calleth upon me, yet they were as hot as an Oven.* And thoſe *falſe Prophets* mentioned by *Jeremiah, that ſpake peace to thoſe that deſpiſed their Maker, and to ſuch as walk'd after the ſtubbornneſs and imagination of their own hearts*; ſaying, *No evil ſhall come upon*

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you; were eager to deliver what they had no Commiſſion to do, and exceeding zealous to publiſh the Meſſage of which God refuſed to be the Author; *I have not ſent theſe Prophets* (ſayes God) *yet they ran: I have not ſpoken to them, yet they propheſied*, (Jer. 23. 21.). So that we may be eaſily deceived, if we are drawn into our belief by the heat and eagerneſs of thoſe that endeavour to impoſe upon us, if we have no other way to difference a fire that warms and relieves, from that which will both ſcorch and burn us.

Sixthly, Falſe Prophets that go abroad into the world, will frequently boaſt the number of themſelves, and ſtartle men with the glory and multitude of their proſelytes. But *Egypt* had many Magicians and Sorcerers in *Pharaohs* time that could confront the Rod of *Aaron*, and boldly vye Miracles with *Moſes: Baals Prieſts were four hundred and fifty, and the Prophets of the Groves four hundred*: and what proportion could *Elijah* bear to ſuch a multitude as theſe? The *Arrians*, among the Chriſtians, were ſo numerous, that *Athanaſius* ſeemed to engage againſt the

the World; And the Papists boast an Universality, as well as Antiquity of their Church; Nay, the *Fanaticks* also tell us of their number, and take all opportunities to shew themselves, in the greatest and most formidable body; Not only to put frights upon Authority; but to gain beholders and Proselytes too: *Herod* and *Pilate*, for such ends as these, *shall become friends*; *And Ephraim and Manasseh shall join together to make an argument from the increase of number, though Manasseh be against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh.* And abundance of men (especially such as neglect to examine the Principles of their Religion) are led on by company and example; they follow the Herd though to their own ruine, and will run on with the Flock or Covey till the Fowler spreads his Net over them; Though arguing to the truth from the numbers that profess it, would for some time have concluded our Religion to have been false, and given the cause both to *Jews* and Heathens; The *Turk* may yet boast the number of his Proselytes, and the Devil brag that his name is *Legion*.

Seventhly, Falſe Prophets will often plead the ſtrictneſs of their lives, and will come with Holineſs written upon their Foreheads, how little ſoever be in their hearts; They will often be very preciſe and ſcrupulous; and though they can *ſwallow Camels, yet they will ſtrain at Gnats*; they will be very tender in ſmaller matters, that they may be thought ſuch as great ſins never ſeize on; like the *Phariſees* in the Goſpel, they will *pay tythe of Mint, Aniſe, and Cummin, although they omit the weightier matters of the Law*: None among the *Jews* were more outwardly grave and formal, than theſe; *they made broad the Phylacteries*, thoſe ſcrolls of Parchment, on which the Law was inſcribed, that they might be capable of more Texts of Scripture, than other mens, to ſhew their great opinion of the Law; they enlarged alſo the fringes of their Garments beyond the proportions of other men, that they might not only be badges of their diſtinction and ſeparation, but evidence them to be exceedingly Religious; becauſe they were commanded by God to be worn to remember them of the Law, as well as to difference the *Jews* from

from other Nations, and to prevent Idolatry, as often as they look'd upon these *Fringes which the God of Israel commanded them to wear*, (Numb. 15. 38.). Scrupulous were these men in relation to all the circumstances of Religion, but they regarded not so much the substance of it, nor what these things were ordain'd to signifie and represent. We read of some in the Apostles dayes, *that had a form of Godliness, who yet denied the power thereof*, (2 Tim. 3. 4.). And this continues still in the World, and will, so long as Religion is capable of being vailed with hypocrisie, and one man cannot discern the inside of another: 'Tis but being strict in outward appearance, and a wicked man may be accounted a Saint; and if open and scandalous sins be avoided, mens inside may be full of rottenness and corruption, and they be canonized still: Thus the Devil may be taken *for an Angel of light*, if he can but hide his malice and his flames; And men may cheat their Neighbours, commit adultery, or secret murder, if their actions escape the notice of others, and they make not themselves a spectacle to the world: This

the Miniſters of Sathan do, like him, acting deeds of darkneſs within, whilſt yet a Candle is hung out at their doors; that are earneſt for reformation in other men, but do not at all reform themſelves; only they endeavour to cover thoſe faults which yet they will not ſtrive to amend: If they bleſs God with their mouths, they care not if they blaſpheme him in their hearts, becauſe their buſineſs is not to recommend themſelves to God, but unto thoſe men whom they deſigningly delude: God himſelf complains of ſuch Atheiſtical hypocrites, that turn things upſide down, *that ſeek to hide their counſel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; They draw near me* (ſayes God) *with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me; but have remov'd their heart far from me*, (Iſai. 29. 13.). And there is yet ſufficient cauſe of lamenting the ſad ſtate of Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, who are ſtill beguiled with good words into ill practices, and under a pretence of Religion are drawn to renounce it. But yet in the midſt of ſuch various Principles preached to the World with noiſe and confidence; with great

great zeal, though little reaſon, (which therefore as an enemy ſome diſgrace and vilifie) they diſtract the minds of thoſe that are unſetled, diſturb the peace of all Society, both Civil and Religious, draw men into Hereſie and Schiſm, and every evil work, and make them think thoſe Prophets inſpired with the breath of God, that ſwell only with their own paſſion, and diſgorge themſelves in fire and brimſtone among mankind: And the Doctrines that cauſe theſe diſorders, they manage with ſuch art, and ſuch ſuitable applications, and have ſo many plauſible pleas to the World, by which they ſpread them with too much ſucceſs over the minds of men: That it muſt fully convince us of a neceſſity to uſe diligence in our enquiries, *and to try the Spirits whether they are of God*; and ſo much the more, becauſe *many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world.* And thus I have done with the Arguments and Reaſons why we ſhould examine the Doctrines of thoſe that come to preach Religion among us,

let their pretensions of Authority be what they will; Though they arise as high as inspiration, and aver their Commission to be from Heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

I Proceed now to my ſecond Particular propoſed, about this duty of *trying Spirits*; And that is to give you ſome Directions how to know when Doctrines propounded, as coming from God, are indeed *revealed from Heaven*, and the Deliverers to be believed as *inſpired from above*, and accordingly to be entertained in the world. Now becauſe men are apt ſometimes to rely on falſe characters of trial; and there being ſeveral marks ſet up, by men of various humours and intereſts, to guide them in their way to Heaven, by which they pretend they are able to direct themſelves and others, and try Doctrines and Opinions: I ſhall make ſome brief reflections on them, that no prejudice may remain to hinder us from embracing the true methods of trying mens Propoſitions in Religion; Eſpecially thoſe who

come with ſo great an authority as inſpiration.

And (1.) We meet with many in the world, who ſuppoſe what they call the Church, which they make as narrow and little as they can, to be either that into which they ultimately reſolve their Faith; or at leaſt to have ſuch Authority as to determine all points in Religion, and what rules are to be accepted as Divine, and therefore by her judgment all Spirits and Doctrines are to be tried, and determined. But this Guide will many times be uncertain; Nay falſe too, if a Society of men, called the Church, agree upon ſuch Principles as are erroneous; which we find a thing not impoſſible, when our preſent experience may inform us, that *Rome*, which would be the only Church; and many ſeparate Congregations in the World, who yet aſſume the honour of a Church, err in Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and in many wayes of Diſcipline and Manners: And this is no wonder at all, when we conſider that a Church is a Society of men; and that every man is capable of error; and that all Councils are managed by votes;

votes; and these many times are given wrong, not only through ignorance or inadvertency, but humour and interest so far prevail in the opinions of many, that we cannot yield their determinations to be infallible: Especially since we often find great Assemblies managed by the tricks and devices of a few, whose designs, being beyond the reach of the multitude, draw them by degrees into the consent to what, had they foreseen, they would never have yielded. Were the promises, indeed, of an infallible direction from the Spirit of God, made to all ages of the Church, and tied to the Assemblies which Christians call Councils; we could not reasonably dispute their determinations, but must obey them: But the promises of this nature being confined to the first planters of the Gospel, that were to publish an infallible Rule to the world, and neither made, nor useful, to future Generations, but only to prove the certainty of the Gospel, to which every Christian is to submit both his Faith and Practice, it being a rule in all things necessary to salvation; The things now ordained by any Church,

or

or Society of men (whatever authority they may claim above us) as neceſſary to ſalvation, have neither ſtrength, nor authority, unleſs it may be declared that they may be taken out of holy Scripture: And therefore General Councils may err, and have err'd in things pertaining to God, as our Church declares in the twenty firſt Article: 'Tis true indeed, the Church of the *Jews* had the Oracles of God committed to them; They were, *cuſtodes legis*, the keepers of the Law: So the Church among the Chriſtians, has the Goſpel committed to her cuſtody, and has a power to determine in indifferent matters; To order all the circumſtances in Religion, for decency, order and edification; and Authority to reſtrain ſuch Controverſies as tend to make a Schiſm and ſeparation, and diſſolve that unity which Chriſtians are frequently exhorted to keep: So that although the Church be a witneſs and keeper of Holy Writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing againſt the ſame; So beſides the ſame, ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for neceſſity of ſalvation: as our Church declares in her twen-

twentieth Article. I ſhall not deny, (nor could I without ſingular pride and Arrogance) but that Fathers and Councils, and all Congregations of holy and judicious Chriſtians, much more Biſhops and Governours of the Church, treating about a point in Religion, attempted to be introduced anew, or being old, is controverted in the world; are with great deference to be attended to: For every mans reaſon will urge this obligation to himſelf; That his own judgement is rendered ſuſpected, when it oppoſes the common and united determination of perſons that cannot juſtly be reproached with want either of skill or honeſty; And 'tis ordinary for men to miſtruſt the ſight of their own eyes, when a multitude of others, having the ſame advantage, cannot behold what a ſingle perſon pretends to ſee. And in Religious affairs, and ſuch matters as are of great moment, when perſons of learning, piety, and authority in the holy Church of Chriſt, aſſemble with ſolemnity, and have a real intention to employ, with all faithfulneſs and diligence, thoſe parts which God has bleſs'd, and encreaſed,

to

to them by the advantage of a peculiar education and ſtudy, invoking a Divine influence upon their endeavours to find out the truth and meaning of any difficult and controverted propoſition; We have great reaſon to incline to the belief of what theſe ſhall deliver for truth; Unleſs the contrary be ſo apparent to us, upon ſufficient enquiry, that there is no cauſe of heſitation at all. This being the moderate opinion of our own Church, we are oppoſed in it both by the *Papiſt* and *Fanatick*; The former aſſerts that *major eſt autoritas Eccleſiæ quam Scripturæ.* That the Authority of the Church is greater than that of the Scripture: And that *Traditiones ſunt pari pietatis affectu cum Scripturis recipiendæ*: Their Traditions are to be received with the ſame affection and devotion as the Scriptures: And truly the latter come not far ſhort of theſe; but as much confine (when it is in their power) the belief as well as practice of their members to the determination of their Aſſemblies; and little differ from the *Roman* infallibility in the end and deſign: For if any Churches among our ſelves do yet affirm

firm as they have formerly declared, that the *Kirk* of *Scotland*, was to be the pattern of their Reformation; then I am ſure they expect the ſame ſubmiſſion, both in opinion and practice, to their Aſſemblies determinations, as a Popiſh Council do to their Canons; or the Pope himſelf to his Decrees: For to the Aſſembly held at *Glaſgow* (1638) they ſwore that for judgement and practice, they would adhere to the Determination of it; though perhaps they knew not what it would determine. But to leave the perſons of thoſe that ſtretch the power of a Church beyond the Authority God has given her: There are three Reaſons which plainly ſhew that any Church, or Council of men, cannot lay down any Propoſitions, which derive their utmoſt Authority from themſelves, that may be the ultimate Rules by which the Doctrines and Opinions of others are to be judged. (1.) Becauſe God to whom our Religion relates, has appointed a rule that being ſuperiour to the inventions of men, muſt bind their fancies and opinions in theſe things, and determine their Faith with thoſe general

actions

actions that are deem'd Religious. To what purpose were the Scriptures given to the World, if they were not to be Rules and Directions to men? Nay, God being the Creator of all things, and in reason claiming the Supreme Sovereignty over the things which he has made; It is in his power to impose what Laws he will upon the world; and 'tis most suitable to his goodness to reveal them: That men may not err for want of knowledge; nor their thoughts contradict the will of their Maker: Now this he has done in the holy Scriptures, which are sufficiently authorized by his own Sanction, in that Miracles attended their first publication, which are, as it were, the Broad Seal of Heaven, that prove them Gods own Act and Deed, when they no way contradict the natural Notions, and the prime foundations of the Religion of men: The Scriptures therefore being thus given and confirmed to us, must either be our Supreme Direction, and an infallible guide in matters of Religion; or else they were deliver'd to no purpose, or to cheat and delude mankind: The former consists

ſiſts not with the wiſdom of God; and the latter would contradict both his goodneſs and his truth: All the difficulty then will be, whether this Rule is ſufficient to guide us in the Doctrine and practice of Religion, ſo that we need not any new inſpiration, or any rules to be ſuperadded, beyond the ſence of Scripture it ſelf, to conduct men in their way to Heaven? And conſequently, whether we may by them judge of all Doctrines and Opinions without the help of the *Roman* infallibility, or what is the ſame in another dreſs, the unerring Spirit of the Enthuſiaſt? But admitting the Scriptures to be of Divine Authority, they themſelves are a ſufficient teſtimony of their own perfection, whilſt they declare that they proceeded from Divine inſpiration, *to be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſh'd unto all good works,* (2 Tim. 3. 16.).

(2.) No Canons or Decrees, of whatever bears the name of Church, or Council, can be a Rule of trying Doctrines in Religion, ſo as to be ultimate and ſupreme; Becauſe all the con-

concluſions and propoſitions of theſe, are themſelves the Doctrines and Opinions of men, either with, or without, the pretence of inſpiration; and all Doctrines are to be tried themſelves; For this muſt be included (as I have ſufficiently proved) in S. *John*'s direction, *try the Spirits whether they are of God*: That therefore which is ſubject to an higher Tribunal, cannot be it ſelf the higheſt; nor what is appointed ſolely to aid us in our trial and examination of Opinions; nor the utmoſt Rule by which we muſt examine them.

Laſtly, If the Doctrines of the Prophets and Apoſtles of old, nay, of Chriſt himſelf, the Saviour of the World, were lyable to the examinations of men; (it being natural to mankind to try the truth of any Propoſitions, before they believe them): Then, certainly, no aſſembly of men can now in reaſon pretend ſuch authority to impoſe their own Doctrines upon the World, as Rules for all to ſubmit unto, without any farther examination: And, if they muſt be examined at all, it muſt be by ſomething of greater credit and authority in the World. Now that

that the Prophets of old were to be tryed, whether true or falſe, is plain to any that will give themſelves leiſure to conſider, not only that, otherwiſe, there could be no ſuch thing as a falſe Prophet in the determination of men, (true and falſe having the ſame evidence) but that God himſelf gave directions under the Old Teſtament how to know the one from the other; (*Deut.* 13. 1. and *chap.* 18. 22.), which rules had been vain and inſignificant, if, by theſe, men were not to try them. Hence is it, that thoſe that attribute great authority to Chriſtian General Councils, do not think their Canons obligatory (unleſs the things included in them bind antecedently, by their own nature, or a ſuperiour Law) till they are received in thoſe Nations and Churches to which they are ſent. (2.) As the Doctrines of the Prophets were to be examined, ſo were alſo thoſe of the Apoſtles: Hence was it, that S. *Paul*, who was extraordinarily called to be an Apoſtle, God himſelf ſupplying him with Unction and Ordination, by giving him authority from Heaven; and our Saviour

deſcending by an apparition from the Clouds, to inveſt him with dignity and power: Hence it was (I ſay) that this great Apoſtle, in his Call dignified beyond his Brethren, commends the *Bereans* (*Acts* 17. 11.) becauſe they ſearched and examined his Doctrines, whether they were true or falſe, by thoſe Scriptures they had already received, and by comparing his Doctrines with the Natural Religion of Mankind, with what our Saviour and other Apoſtles preached; and moſt probably with the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, that they might be aſſured, that what he delivered was conſonant to that which was there exhibited concerning the *Meſſias*: And therefore theſe were of more pliable, and ingenuous, and gentile tempers, than thoſe of *Theſſalonica*, who were more regardleſs of theſe concerns; as S. *Chryſoſtom* comments upon this Text. (3.) The Doctrines even of our Saviour himſelf, (though *never man ſpake like him*) were lyable to examination by thoſe that heard, before they entertain'd them: And certainly if any might recommend propoſitions upon

upon his own authority, he might, who was the *Wiſdom of the Father*; in whom *all fulneſs dwelt*; Nay, the *fulneſs of the Godhead* was, as it were, incloſed in his own body: Yet he bids the *Jews* to *ſearch the Scriptures*, and to conſider how well his Perſon and his Doctrines agreed with the antient Predictions in relation to him; and, accordingly, either to receive, or reject, him: *For theſe* (ſayes he) *are they which teſtifie of me; And in them ye think ye have eternal life*: (*John* 5. 39.) So that it is plainly evident, from the beginning, that no Doctrines, under pretence of what inſpiration ſoever, were to be received by men without examination: But, as thoſe of the Apoſtles were to be compared with what our Saviour delivered; his again to be meaſured, not only by his own divine authority, but this alſo was to be proved by the Law and the Prophets, and the Prophets themſelves by thoſe Rules which God had given to the *Jews* to judge by: So is there not reaſon, that the doctrines of men pretending to Chriſtianity, under what authority ſoever they are publiſhed, ſhould ſtill be ex-

amined by a ſuperiour Rule; even by what the primitive Planters of our Religion have left for our peruſal and direction, *viz.* the doctrine of Chriſt and his holy Apoſtles? which priviledge (whatever *Romaniſts* plead for themſelves) to hide from, or deny to, others, is the greateſt cruelty and irreligion; Enough it is to render any doctrine ſuſpected, that thus hides and runs to corners, and avoids all the tryals of men: And we have great reaſon to miſtruſt thoſe who take away mens judgement of diſcretion, valuing them only like Beaſts that periſh, whilſt they are not perſwaded, but whip'd to their work, and many times cripled under their burden, when yet they know not what they carry. Thus I have (though more largely than my firſt thoughts deſigned) not only ſtated the uſe and authority of the Church in her Synods and Councils in the examination of Doctrines and Opinions, but ſhewed you withal, that as their Decrees are not infallible, ſo neither are they the higheſt Rules by which we judge of the Doctrines of men: Had it been otherwiſe when our Saviour

viour came to plant his Goſpel, the infallibility of the *Jewiſh Sanhedrim* had juſtly condemned him for an Impoſtor, and all the Chriſtian Religion deliver'd, and authorized, by him, had proved only a Fable and a Dream.

CHAP. VII.

THe moſt conſiderable Adverſaries that oppoſe this way of ſtating the Churches Authority in determining points of Faith, ſeem to many to be the *Romaniſts*: and therefore this Chapter will briefly confute their high pretences to a ſtrange Infallibility, by which they have introduced as ſtrange Doctrines into the Chriſtian Religion. And, indeed, there was never a Law, yet, ſo plainly penn'd, but that the inventions of men (who make it their buſineſs to render Laws, both Divine, and humane, ſubſervient to their Secular intereſts) will blunt its edge, and endeavour to make it their own property, by altering, or over-urging its deſign. The ſame uſe has been made of Texts of Scripture, by the two Opponents of the Church of *England*, enlarging, or diminiſhing, the Infallibility promiſed to the Apoſtles, that it may the better

better countenance their own pretences: Some reſtraining the promiſes expreſſing the holy Spirits miraculous aſſiſtance in the guiding the Sacred Pen-men of the Goſpel, to the *Roman* Church; And others extending it to every man of their own perſuaſion, or at leaſt to the Miniſters and Elders of their Churches: I ſhall here therefore ſpend a few leaves to ſhew that the *Papiſts* can have no ground in the Scripture to build their infallible determinations on, nor any reaſon at all to maintain their infallibility.

I know not how it comes to paſs that other Churches muſt forfeit their intereſts in the promiſes of the Goſpel, that the *Romaniſts* may proudly arrogate them to themſelves; Or any reaſon why the right of others muſt ſneak or ſtoop to their bold uſurpations: As if their Church could not well be Head of the World, unleſs we allow it to have all the Brains too; and daſh them out of the Sculls of others, to fill their head till their underſtandings become incomprehenſibly infallible, that all the race of Chriſtians in the world, may receive Rules only from them; and give up the natural

freedom of their minds to enlarge the Pope's Empire and Authority; As if they only were like the *Jews* of old, to whom were committed *the Oracles of God*; And theſe they might either keep to themſelves, or allow them to others as they ſee occaſion: This makes a reproof to them (like Rebellion againſt a Prince) a crime ſo great, that nothing but death can ſufficiently expiate: Among them, 'tis but calling any one Heretick, and a dreſſing him up with pictures of Devils, and preſently he is expoſed to the flames: And this is ſuch a Sovereign power of life and death, that it reaches not only the body, but the ſoul. Thus as ſome flea the truth, to prove it naked; and inſtead of declaring it, expoſe it: So others pretending to its ſafe cuſtody, permit none to underſtand it but themſelves; And ſo the reſt muſt ſwallow a *Serpent* for a *Fiſh*, and eat *ſtones* inſtead of *bread*: As if impoſing cheats upon the World, were the beſt way to prove a man infallible; and deluding others, were the only Argument to evidence, that we are not deceived our ſelves: This is the great ſecret of the *Roman* Empire, that does not only

ly silence Disputes, but forbid Enquiry: That does not only stop the mouths, but crack the skulls of mankind, taking away our judgement of discretion, and our choice, and Metamorphosing men into Beasts: And then they put the yoke upon us, and whip us on to toyl and drudgery; that their own Pastures may be covered with Flocks, and their Valleys stand thick with Corn, whilst the high Hills laugh and sing. For if it be once supposed that their Church is infallible, whatever they determine must be true; And when we have vow'd obedience to them, 'twill be too late afterwards to make enquiry. A powerful way this is to reconcile men, when contradictions themselves may thus meet, and at any infinite distance embrace, when the *Romanists* please to declare them true. If this one point be but admitted, 'twill be ridiculous to dispute the rest: For all the Articles must certainly be true, which a Church has determined that cannot err: This is a new way, indeed, to walk by faith, and not by sense; to pull out our eyes that we may see the better; And instead of capti-

captivating our underſtandings to the obedience of Faith, to deliver up our reaſon to another man. This is perfectly to enſlave our ſelves, when *Chriſt has made us free*; to entangle our necks in the yoke of bondage, and to leave the burden of the old Law, for the greater load and oppreſſion of a new: And to make our ſelves like gentle Beaſts, ready trapped and furniſh'd for others to ride us. Let the Church of *Rome* once be infallible, and then they become as omniſcient as *Apollo*; All their determinations are *ex Tripode*; And we muſt then become as ſilent as in the Grave, and make our ſelves a prey to theſe Worms: We muſt kneel down at the Popes feet, and make our ſelves fit to be trod upon. But our reaſon is ſo properly our own, that as no man has a right over it, ſo is it ſtrongly fortified within us, that none is able to take it from us, unleſs we will deliver it up our ſelves: If we will ſuffer the *Philiſtins* to deprive us of our ſtrength, and put out our eyes, they will certainly, then, make ſport with us; And if we yield ſo great a Point, as they unjuſtly challenge from the Old

Old Teſtament, and the New, we deſerve, then, to be made a Spectacle, when they have no reaſon to prove their Authority, but becauſe they have a mind to rule, and we become ſuch fools as to obey: *The Prophets then may propheſie falſely, and the Prieſts bear rule by their means, when the people ſhall love to have it ſo; and what will you do in the end thereof?* (Jer. 5. 31.)

Seneca ſayes, of men that are curious about trifles, *operoſe nihil agunt* (*De brev. vitæ cap.* 13.) that they are very induſtrious about nothing; and though the ſtudying of many of our Modern Controverſies, is like an Emperours locking himſelf into his Cloſet, that he may be very buſie in catching Flies; and we may ſay of ſome great Controvertiſts in the world, what *Seneca* ſayes of thoſe that took abundance of pains to find out a few unprofitable experiments; that by this they did not appear more learned, but troubleſom, (*Vid. ut ſup.*) Yet when, by admitting a Principle, our reaſon is deſtroyed, and our Religion in an eternal hazard, by being at the devoir of another altogether as fal-

fallible as our selves; and of whose honesty we cannot alwayes be assured: We must then rally our Arguments to resist, or suffer our selves to be led into slavery. That there is not, therefore, a foundation from any Text, for the *Romanists* pretended Infallibility, nor any Argument grounded upon reason, I shall endeavour briefly to make appear: And therefore we may, yet, believe our selves to be men, and the Pope himself to be no other.

Because (1.) There is no absolute promise of intire Infallibility, made to men in the whole Book of God; but only with limitation and restriction. I readily grant that there are promises of Infallibility in some Texts; But these were made good in the Apostles, and the seventy Disciples; And yet though delivered in general terms, they are to be restrained not only to the persons to whom our Saviour spake; but to things necessary for them to know, in relation to that end for which they were inspired: And these were only such truths as our Saviour delivered to be the standing rules for Posterity to guide themselves by, in relation to their eternal welfare: This

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is plain both from the latter part of the Verſe, of which the promiſe of the *Spirits guiding into all truth*, (Joh. 6. 3.). is the former; And from the compariſon of this Text with another; In the Verſe of which this Text is a part, we have this added to confirm the promiſe, leſt any ſhould think the revelation of the Spirit ſhould not prove equally certain with the declaration of our Saviour: *He ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf, but whatſoever he ſhall hear, that ſhall he ſpeak: Whatſoever he ſhall be commiſſioned to inſpire you with, that ſhall he communicate unto you*: Which is ſtill included in theſe two particulars; (1.) In what our Saviour himſelf had delivered to them; Or (2.) In what he ſhould ſuggeſt to them, to make their defence *before Kings and Rulers*, which need not at all concern them, whoſe ignorance in the Laws might cauſe them to fear; *becauſe the Holy Ghoſt ſhould teach them, in the ſame hour, what they ought to ſay*, (Luke 12. 11, 12.). This only is ſuperadded; *And he will ſhew you things to come*: Which muſt either relate to the *Gnoſtick* defection, and the perdition of the *Jews*, which our Savi-

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our had predicted, (*Matth.* 24.). Or elſe to the Spiritual nature of Chriſts Kingdom, which the Apoſtles were ſo prejudiced againſt, to inform them, that this, with ſome other things, which they could not bear whilſt he was with them in the fleſh, they ſhould at laſt be ſatisfied in, (*Joh.* 10. 12.). Or elſe it muſt include thoſe predictions of Prophets, more frequent in the Primitive times of Chriſtianity; ſuch was that of *Agabus*, (Acts 11. 28.), who foretold the Famine that ſhould come to paſs in the dayes of *Claudius Caſar*: And that prediction of *S. Pauls bonds* and *impriſonment*, (Acts 21. 11.): All which conſidered together, brings the promiſe of the Spirit, and infallibility, to the Apoſtles, under determinate reſtraints and limitations. But (2.) This will further appear, if we compare the promiſe of *guiding into all truth*, with that other, relating to the *Holy Ghoſt*, (Joh. 14. 26.); where the Apoſtles are told, *that he ſhould teach them all things*, (more plainly thoſe which our Saviour had delivered) and bring thoſe things to their memory which they might forget, though before declared:

clared: *He ſhall teach you all things*, (ſayes he) *and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* So that it appears that the Apoſtles had not the *Spirit without meaſure*; though they may be ſaid, *to be filled with the Holy Ghoſt*; And that this promiſe of infallibility to them, was made in a limited and reſtrained ſenſe.

Secondly, Suppoſing the promiſes of Infallibility were made in never ſo enlarged a ſenſe, yet they are to be reſtrained to the perſons to whom they were at firſt made, as to the unerring conduct: and I might eaſily make it appear, that they cannot in their full ſence concern any but the Apoſtles themſelves, and the firſt Preachers of the Chriſtian Religion: Becauſe the end of this extraordinary inſpiration was to make them capable of preſcribing to us an infallible and unerring rule; Which being accompliſhed, there is no farther occaſion of an infallible inſpiration. For to what end ſhould this be continued to one, or a certain number of men, unleſs they were, upon new emergencies, to deliver new Doctrine to the world? If

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it be neceſſary to the underſtanding of what has been already preſcribed; the Laws of the Goſpel will not only want one of the moſt excellent qualifications of a Law, that it be plain and eaſily intelligible; But the ſame neceſſity will argue infallibility uſeful to all, which renders it thus neceſſary unto ſome: For if it be therefore neceſſary to ſome, that they may become Guides to others; Since their conduct, in relation unto others, muſt conſiſt in advice, and declaring that ſence of the Law, which could not be underſtood without them; (all which muſt be expreſſed by word or writing) every man has as much need of infallibility that he may not miſunderſtand the interpretation, as any have to prevent their miſapprehenſions of the Law, if there can be no peace without infallibility. Now that all men have not infallibility is as readily yielded, as it is to be proved that the Pope has none.

Thirdly, If there were, now, this infallibility amongſt men, there muſt be a perpetual revelation: For, if the perfection of the humane nature could here render any men infallible, we may

may well conjecture that many might have been in every age, that might have been Directors to the reſt: Or if it had been founded in humane nature, why ſhould not an equal perfection render all mankind infallible? Either of them being granted, will invalidate the neceſſity of a Divine Revelation; and turn the word of God into a ſtory; and *do deſpight to the ſpirit of grace*; if rendering it uſeleſs and a fable will do it; For to what end ſhould any men be inſpired, when they were, before, infallible in themſelves? The infallibility therefore, which we diſcourſe of muſt proceed from a ſtrong, and certain, Inſpiration; And whatever is delivered by vertue of this, is of equal authority with the Scriptures themſelves: And then none can be ſafe in his life, or fortunes, when ever any inſpired man makes it his pleaſure to take them away: Nay, if we are conſcientious, we muſt yield them up upon demand, *leſt haply we may be found fighters againſt God.* And this appears in the *Romaniſts* themſelves, as well as others taught by them; The more conſcientious any of them are, the more readily do they yield to

the impositions of their superiours; and, they have reason for it, if they think them to be absolutely infallible. For no private evidence of a thing must subvert their faith in the Churches determination; and so much the more triumphant is their faith, by how much the more it captivates their understandings: As it is so much the more meritorious, by how much the less it has of evidence; So the greater the Objections are that meet and encounter the Churches determinations, their faith is rendered the more glorious and full of victory: Let the Doctrine then be never so wicked in it self, or consequences; the conscientious believer of the point of *Roman* Infallibility, must neither see the one, nor the other; But renounce all the evidence of his reason, and if occasion be, (as there is sometimes) of his senses too. For what evidence can reasonably be attended to, that bears a testimony against that which is infallible? This then must be a ready method to change the nature of good and evil, and the eternal Law instamp'd upon our minds, if the mutation proceeds from the *Roman* Chair.

Chair. Nay, the nature of things need not be changed, if the Pope pleaſe to change their names: Men may borrow then, and never pay, if he pleaſes to cancell the debt; Ruining families, and overturning Kingdoms will become noble, and a glorious exploit; Nay, religious acts, when he is at leiſure to adopt them into the number: Burning Cities, and murdering Princes, ſhall be accounted means of propagating the Goſpel, if he pleaſe once to determine, that *we may do evil, that good may come of it*; And blowing up the Eſtates of Kingdoms is preſently holy, if he will but ſanctifie the Powder, and Canonize the man that has the courage to attempt it: So powerful is this Doctrine of *Roman* Infallibility, that it can change the Devil into an Angel of Light: And, let the Pope himſelf be never ſo wicked, his determinations are all true and good, and he may remain his Holineſs ſtill: He may ſubvert by degrees, or all at once, the whole Doctrine of Chriſtianity, (though from thence he receives his pretenſions of authority) if he pleaſes to declare it a Fable, when it ſhall no longer comport with his advantage;

Nay, he has already ſo blended it with the Religion of the *Jews*, and practice of the *Heathens*, that Chriſtianity is ſo buried in an heap of rubbiſh, that 'tis an hard matter to gather it up out of ſuch a great confuſion of ruines: The ſubſtance is loſt in the midſt of Ceremony; internal devotion is interrupted by a pompous Scene of Pageantry and Shew; and yet the evidence of our ſenſes muſt be rejected in the Doctrine, which they ſo much applaud in practice.

And yet (*Fourthly*), Notwithſtanding all the *Roman* pretences to Infallibility; If there are any promiſes made of it, they do as well concern other Churches as themſelves: For if theſe promiſes were made to the Apoſtles in general (as is very plain from the circumſtances of their delivery) if they were not terminated in them, but reached alſo the whole ſucceſſion of thoſe by vertue of whom Chriſts promiſe was made good, of *being with the Apoſtles, always, to the end of the world*; Then either all Churches muſt be infallible or none; eſpecially all that are able to derive their ſucceſſion from any Apoſtle, or Apoſto-

Apoſtolical men that were once Biſhops, and preſided there: And if ſo, then the Church of *Jeruſalem* muſt be infallible, becauſe S. *James* the leſs was appointed their Biſhop, either by our Saviour himſelf, (as ſome ſay) or elſe immediately by the Apoſtles (as others.). The Church of *Alexandria*, becauſe this was the Biſhoprick of S. *Mark*, muſt become as infallible as that of *Rome*; That of *Conſtantinople*, becauſe founded by S. *Andrew*; That of *Epheſus*, becauſe S. *John* was ſeated there. Nay thoſe, alſo, of *Smyrna*, *Pergamus*, *Thyatira*, *Sardis*, *Philadelphia* and *Laodicea*, becauſe this Apoſtle laid the foundations of them: Nay, and our own Church of *Britain* too (which our adverſaries will hardly yield infallible) becauſe *Simon* the *Zelot* preached here, wrought many Miracles, and at laſt ſuffered Martyrdom for the Faith of Chriſt, and our Native Soil has the honour of his Bones; if the *Greek* Menologies may obtain any credit amongſt men. But to bring this buſineſs nearer to an head: If this infallibility will not be allowed to all Churches of the Apoſtles planting, nor to thoſe over which they more

especially presided, (as they certainly will never yield it, whose interest it is to keep it unto themselves); Yet why should not *Antioch* become infallible, which was a Church of S. *Peter*'s planting at least seven years before he came to *Rome*? Must the elder Sister become a fool, that the younger may appear infallible? Or must we deny the priviledge of *Antioch*, because it would invalidate that of *Rome*? The latter seems their most probable conjecture; though 'tis easily proved S. *Peter* was at *Antioch*, but eagerly disputed, whether ever he was at *Rome*. But allowing S. *Peter* to have been at *Rome*; and not only so, but to have been Bishop there, and the present Pope to be his Successor, (which yet is hard for them to prove, especially when the Succession is to be traced through their Anti-Popes, and Pope *Joan* must become an Holy Father too), How came this promise of infallibility to be fixed only upon S. *Peter*, when it was spoken to the whole Apostolical College? If you will say, that the infallibility can be fixed but in one; and that we may as well discourse of many Omnipotents, as many Infallibles;

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(and certainly 'tis to be proved with equal ſucceſs, were the infallibility not capable of reſtraint) Yet why muſt it be fixed upon S. *Peter*, and not on any other of the Apoſtles? S. *Paul*, though a later Apoſtle, has as much to plead for a ſettlement of it upon the *Gentiles*, as ever S. *Peter* to fix it upon the *Jews*. Nay, the *Romaniſts* themſelves have greater reaſon to derive it from S. *Paul*, than ever they had for deriving it from S. *Peter*; Unleſs they acknowledge themſelves to ſucceed the Circumciſion, of which S. *Peter* was only Biſhop. But perhaps they will plead Infallibility from Supremacy: and afterwards (if occaſion ſerves) plead Supremacy from Infallibility again. Yet ſtill S. *Paul* will bid as fair for the Supremacy too, if we take time to examine his Plea. Saint *Paul* was not only deſigned to his Apoſtleſhip by the Grace of God, before he had any merit in himſelf, being a choſen Veſſel to bear Chriſt's Name amongſt the *Gentiles*, when he was appointed to his Office from his Mothers Womb, (*Gal.* 1. 15.); But his Converſion was attended with Miracles, and from a Perſecutor, when the

deſign was laid, and his malice big againſt the Chriſtian Church, he was ſtruck down with a dart from Heaven, and convinced by that Light which made him blind: He was brought to this Religion with Pomp and Ceremony, and uſhered into the Church with a train of circumſtances that were Heralds to his honour, and proclaimed him great (*Acts* 9.): Nor was he greater in his Apoſtleſhip, than in his ſufferings: For, after a large Catalogue of his miſeries (2 *Cor.* 11.), he made the Tragedy compleat by his death: He was thrown into Priſon with S. *Peter*; And (if *Baronius* may be credited) the Pillars are yet remaining, at which they were both bound and ſcourg'd: And had he not been a *Roman*, he might have been crucified with S. *Peter*: But being ſuch (like a Perſon of Honour) he was beheaded: In the time he lived he laboured more abundantly than the reſt of the Apoſtles; (1 *Cor.* 15. 10.): Nor was he in any reſpect behind the very chief of them (2 *Cor.* 11. 5.): He neither yielded to the argument of intereſt, when he received his firſt conviction; nor did he, when he was baptized

baptized or illuminated from above, and by inſpiration had received a ſufficient Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel, go to derive his authority from the Apoſtles, as if he had been inferiour unto them; But he ſtraightway preached Chriſt in the Synagogues; though to the amazement of all that heard him (*Acts* 9. 20, 21.); He was not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt, though his former zeal another way, might be and was objected to him; And, that he might ſufficiently evidence the truth, and the honour, of his Apoſtleſhip, he went into the untrodden paths of the World, where none had adventured to preach the ſame Doctrine before him: *For ſo* (ſayes he) *have I ſtrived to preach the Goſpel, not where Chriſt was named, leſt I ſhould build upon anothers foundation,* (*Rom.* 15. 20.): All this we have drawn into a narrow compaſs (*Gal.* 1. 16, 17.); *But it pleaſed God, who ſeparated me from my mothers womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; Immediately I conferred not with fleſh and blood; neither went I up to* Jeruſalem *to thoſe which were Apoſtles*

Apostles before me. As he was most justly stiled *The Apostle of the Gentiles*; For the care of all their Churches lay upon him, (and I hope the *Romans* were not then *Jews*; let them be whatever they will since) and came more upon him every day (2 *Cor.* 11.28.). He opposed the principal Officers of the Church at *Jerusalem*, and gave no place by subjection, no not for an hour, since they that seemed to be somewhat, added nothing in conference to his knowledge; but perceived him to be appointed the *Apostle of the Gentiles*, as well as S. *Peter* was the *Apostle of the Jews*; when they came to *Antioch*, he *withstood Peter to the very face*, *because* (sayes he) *he was to be blamed*, for that both he himself had dissembled with the *Jews*, and had perswaded *James* and *Barnabas* into the same compliance; And, upon the whole, neither of them *walked according to the truth of the Gospel*; And all this difference was upon no smaller point than this, that *a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, (*Gal.* 2.): 'Tis plain S. *Paul* had here, in a proper sense, the *right hand of fellowship*; not only in that

that they admitted him into the ſociety of the Apoſtles; but they gave him the preheminence among them: And S. *Peter* had a great deal of reaſon to do it, if a Scholar ought to reſpect his Inſtructor: For 'tis plain, that S. *Paul* informed him in a point that he knew not, or diſſembled before; though he knew enough to be the *Apoſtle of the Circumciſion*, a Province, to which he was then deſigned: ſo that the *Romaniſts* claiming Supremacy from S. *Peter*, will add no great proof to their infallibility; nor this be ſufficiently evinced by the derivation of their ſucceſſion from him: Unleſs the ſecond Chapter to the *Galatians* be razed out of the Sacred Canon; Or the denyal of a juſtification by faith, without the ceremonial works of the Law, becomes a point, in the determination of which, infallibility is not at all concerned: Or elſe 'tis lawful for them to reject this authority of S. *Paul*, if they ſtill embrace the doctrine of S. *Peter*.

Fifthly, Suppoſing there had been an infallibility made to S. *Peter*, and from him derived to the Church of *Rome*; yet what ſhall we now do for direction? ſince neither they nor we know where

where to find it, upon a diligent ſearch into their own opinions of it. For ſome place it in a General Council; ſome in the Pope and this together; ſome in himſelf and College of Cardinals; and ſome again in the Pope alone. If this Infallibility be placed in a General Council, it will be as eagerly diſputed when it may be ſaid to be General; Some giving Councils ſo fair an Epithet, when others do as confidently deny them to be ſuch: The infallibility therefore cannot be found here; Unleſs it remains in ſuch a Council, where all the circumſtances and qualifications can be found, that are able to give it ſuch a denomination; When the intereſts of Princes and Churches ſhall be determined previous to the Aſſembly; and all are agreed who ſhall ſummon it: And when this difficult (if not impoſſible) task is accompliſh'd; If they muſt all conclude in one opinion; I fear this can never be; Or if things muſt be determined by the major Vote, and this makes infallible truth, how came the greater part to be infallible, when the leſſer number are ſo far from being inſpired at all, that they give their Votes con-

contrary to the truth? Nay, by ſhifting the Tables to a new point, many of thoſe may, by theſe rules, become infallible who, in another, had err'd juſt before; but if the approbation of the Pope muſt be added to the determination of the Council, the infallibility, then, will reſt in himſelf: Becauſe, if he pleaſes to be of a contrary opinion, he can make void the Votes of the Council, by refuſing to comply with their determination; And conſequently they are not infallible in that which wants the Supreme evidence of the Popes aſſent. But, if after all this (ſuppoſing their united concurrence) infallibility ſhould not reſt in this Aſſembly; but in the Pope and his College of Cardinals; Then the Arguments for obedience to the General Council, taken from their infallibility in determining, are ſuperſeded by an higher Authority; Though the ſame inconveniences obviate the infallibility of theſe, which do attend the former opinion: Finally, ſuppoſe that it reſts in the Pope alone: Then if it be his priviledge as a man, it will be the endowment of the reſt of mankind; And then they will need none of his

ſingle determinations: If he is infallible as he is Pope; Then, either all his Speeches are infallible, or elſe when he determines about matters of Faith: If the former be true; Then he cannot poſſibly deceive; And conſequently, he would not prove ſo able, and ſucceſsful, a Stateſman as he is, if he could not ſometimes diſſemble his opinion: If the latter poſition be affirmed to be true; Then either all his Propoſitions concerning Faith, muſt be infallible, and there is no diſputing with him; Nor is it lawful for him at any time to oppoſe in a School queſtion, where the Orthodox part is uſually held by the reſpondent, for fear his Propoſitions ſhould become infallible, and truth be rendered incapable of being held; Or elſe he becomes only infallible, when he is gravely ſeated, and determines from his Chair; And if this be the caſe of us mortals; We muſt not only ſtay for reſolution, till he is dreſs'd and cloath'd in all his Robes, and Pontificals, any of which (for ought I know) being wanting, he may fail in his determination, and our Faith fail for want of ſome Ceremonial accoutrement: But ſuppoſing

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all this to be done, if he cannot be infallible till he is in his Chair; Then the Chair ſeems more infallible than himſelf: Yet when all this is accompliſhed (for ought we know, or ever can) he may not be a lawful Pope: For if he be unbaptized, he cannot be a Prieſt; and if he is no Prieſt, he cannot be a Pope; And if the intention of the Prieſt that Baptized him, and of the Biſhop that gave him the order of Prieſthood, be required to make both valid; If, at his Baptiſm, he met with an untoward Prieſt; Or, at his Ordination, with an ungodly Biſhop, that performed the Ceremonies, without minding what they were about, ſuſpending their intention, at thoſe times, either through malice, or inadvertency, or deſigning the contrary, the whole buſineſs is ſtill ſpoiled; And the Chair will not beſtow infallibility upon one that is indeed no lawful Pope. But what ſhall we think of the Anti-Popes, when two are choſen, (as it has been poſſible) and they both ſtruggle for the Chair, where reſts the infallibility then? Or what becomes of it in the interval betwixt the death of the laſt,

laſt, and the Election of a new? Let even the Chair keep it for the next that ſhall poſſeſs it; And I wiſh it would alwayes ſit there, and never endeavour to trouble us: If they will periſh in their own folly, I know no help, being quite tired with expoſing their Opinion. Upon the view of the whole, we ſee the Propoſition is made good, that, ſince their own Opinions are ſo different about the Seat of Infallibility, neither they, nor we, know where to find it.

Sixthly, If there were this infallibility in the Church of *Rome*, and they had agreed where to fix it; ſo that they are ſure they once knew how to find it: Yet it plainly appears that it is now loſt, ſince their whole Church has determined, and yielded to many things plainly erroneous; and quite oppoſite to the authority of the Scriptures: I ſhall at preſent only inſtance in three, though I might produce a Catalogue of more. The (1.) *Is the taking away the Cup from the people.* (2.) *Prayer in an unknown tongue.* (3.) *The Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation.*

Firſt, I inſtance in *taking away the Cup, in the bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*,

Supper, from the people; as an error determined by the Church of *Rome*. By *Cup*, I mean the Sacramental Cup, and not that of Ablution, by which the *Romaniſts* have ſhifted from the doubts of ſome ignorant Objectors. Now that the detention of the *Cup*, (notwithſtanding all endeavours of an evaſion) is a palpable error, is apparent from the inſtitution of our Saviour as recorded by all the *Evangeliſts* that mention it in all the Goſpels where this is repeated: For as the eſſential parts are always ſet down, ſo we have preſcribed *Bread* and *Wine*, which by a ſolemn conſecration, are bleſſed and ſeparated from common uſes, to ſignifie Chriſts *Body* and *Blood*, and in a ſeparate manner to repreſent Chriſt dead, and not united under one Symbol; And to whomſoever he gave the *Body* repreſented by the *Bread*, the ſame perſon received the *Blood*, ſignified by the *Wine* contained in the *Cup*; As it appears upon the view of Chriſts own inſtitution. If it be Objected (upon the grant of this, which none can deny) that the Apoſtles then only received; And that the *Romaniſts* themſelves allow it to the Prieſts: It

may, from thence, with a greater colour be argued, that the whole Sacrament ought only to be continued to the Clergy; And that the Laity ſhould not receive ſo much as a part; And then the argument will ſooner deprive them of all, than any one part of it. But that I may totally invalidate this ſcruple, and, at the ſame time, prove the *Papiſts* to be erroneous; Let us view the inſtitution as repeated by S. *Paul*, who has in this proved *Rome* to have err'd, and clearly frees us from their impoſture; Though S. *Peter* ſayes nothing of it; (1 *Cor.* 11. 23.). *I have received of the Lord, that which I alſo delivered unto you; That the Lord Jeſus the ſame night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you, this do for a remembrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo he took the Cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood; This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me:* Now the whole deſign of this repetition of the firſt Inſtitution, is to rebuke thoſe diſorderly practices of the whole body of the Church

of

of *Corinth*, and to regulate all by the Inſtitution of our Saviour; And all together, as well people, as Clergy, are told, that as *often as they eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, they ſhew forth the Lords death till he come.* If this, then, is to be continued in the Church as a Memorial of Chriſts Death, till his coming again to judge the World, (which the Church of *Rome* will not deny): It muſt be an error thus to depart from the firſt Inſtitution of Chriſt, and the ſucceeding practice of his bleſſed Apoſtles, (to ſay nothing of other Ages of the Church) to give to the people an half Communion, (which the Prieſts will not be contented with themſelves) and to deliver them only a part of the Sacrament. This, certainly, is ſuch an error, as does not only void their infallibility, but a crime too; Unleſs the greateſt Sacriledge be a vertue: And, in plain language, it certainly concludes that either the Scriptures or the the *Romaniſts* are not infallible.

Secondly, I inſtance in their Prayer in an *unknown tongue*; I mean a language unknown to the people. I cannot but wonder (if we had no direcți-

ons in the Book of God concerning this matter) that any perſons ſhould be ſo ſtupid, as to petition from God they know not what, and to offer that under the notion of a reaſonable ſervice, which they do not underſtand: For how can that be preſented with Faith, which they know not whether it be ſuch as God will accept, and as becomes them to offer? The Prieſt here may curſe the people in the name of the Devil, when they think they are bleſs'd in the name of God: But not to proſecute any abſurdities conſequential to this irrational practice, beſides what the Scriptures mention, (deſigning not at preſent to handle theſe things at large): 'Tis a direct contradiction to that of S. *Paul*, (1 *Cor.* 14. *Chap.* 14, 15. and 16 *Verſes*). For the Apoſtle having laid down this general direction, that all things, in the publick Worſhip, *ſhould be done to edification*; He affirms, that *praying* and *bleſſing* in *unknown tongues*, did not accompliſh this end, (*verſ.* the 12*th* and 17*th*). (1.) Becauſe he that *prayes in an unknown tongue*, though he underſtands it himſelf, *becomes unprofitable unto others*, v. the 14. (2.) Becauſe

cauſe no man, that underſtands not, can give his aſſent, or breath forth a wiſh, by ſaying *Amen*, to a Prayer or Bleſſing, in an *unknown tongue*, ver. the *16th*. And the Apoſtle, from the whole, inferrs this as a rule unto himſelf: *That when he prays with the Spirit*, (*i.e.* in an unknown tongue, which was then an immediate gift of the Spirit) *he would pray with underſtanding alſo*; (*i.e.*) ſo as he, underſtanding it himſelf, might become fruitful unto others, by giving them its juſt interpretation; that they who underſtood not divers languages, might be able to ſay *Amen*, when they were rendered into their own. So that it muſt be an error in the Church of *Rome*, to enjoyn their publick Prayers to be made in an unknown tongue: Unleſs they will invalidate the Scriptures of S. *Paul*, by a blind and unwritten authority, from S. *Peter*.

Laſtly, They have loſt their pretended infallibility, by determining that monſtrous and abſurd Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*. It cannot be expected, when I introduce this point as a proof of another, that I ſhould expatiate upon all the abſurdities that

attend ſo prodigious a determination: As that the ſame Body may be in a thouſand places at once; that there may be admitted a penetration of dimenſions; That a Body may be ſomewhere, where it was not before, without changing its place; That the whole Body of Chriſt may be contain'd within the ſmall compaſs, nay, in every little part, of a Wafer; That it may be eat every day, & yet remain the ſame ſtill; That an irrational creature (a *Mouſe* for example) may feed upon the Body of our Lord; That one thing may be chang'd into another thing, which did exiſt before; That a Body may be in a place after the manner of a Spirit: Nay, that Chriſt may give his own Body to be eaten by his Diſciples, whilſt, yet, he remained alive, and entire at the Table. Theſe, and ſuch like, are the abſurd conſequences of Tranſubſtantiation, which men muſt ſwallow *with the ſubſtantial Body and Blood of Chriſt*, in the *Roman* Sacrament of the *Lords Supper*: And they require too large a diſcourſe for me to expatiate upon each ſeverally, and apart. I ſhall therefore inſtance in one abſurdity, or rather a foundation

on of great impiety, such as destroys the authority of the Gospel (if this Doctrine of Transubstantiation proves true, and is not an error): And that is; That it destroyes all the certainty of our senses. For, if that which has the colour and appearance of Bread; That which my taste informs is such; That which by touching and handling of it seems to be Bread, by as great an evidence as can appear to my understanding, by the testimony of my senses, concerning their own proper objects, where there is a true *medium*, and a just distance: If this, which thus seems to me to be Bread and Wine, may yet not be so; but the substantial Body and Blood of our Lord: Then, I can have no sufficient evidence that the Christian Doctrine was revealed from Heaven. For the proof of this depending upon the certainty of those Miracles which were at the first wrought for the confirmation of it. And these depending upon the certainty of their senses, who were then eye-witnesses to the Miracles; And, if the senses of all mankind may together be deceived about this Sacrament, the same possibility might make them so,

when the Miracles were wrought to prove the Goſpel: And then we have no certainty of our Religion; but the whole Goſpel may prove a fable, and its greateſt confirmation be nothing but an impoſture. This is enough to make the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, to be introduced into the World, with pomp and ceremony, and to render it authentick, by an infallible authority. If it be ſaid that, in relation to the firſt confirmation of the Goſpel, our ſenſes were free, and then could not be deceived; But that now, ſince the Chriſtian Religion was ſufficiently authorized, this very Doctrine thus confirmed, tyes up our ſenſes; ſince 'tis rational to ſubmit them to Divine revelation: I Anſwer; That, if the New Teſtament did, any where, thus impoſe upon the faculties of men; It would (1.) Be difficult, upon the ſame grounds, for me to believe that mine eyes were not impoſed upon, when I read the words. (2.) Suppoſing that I did read them true; And that were ſufficiently confirmed, that I underſtood what I read; Yet ſince no other Text can be pleaded for Tranſubſtantiation beſides, *This*

is

is my Body; Why muſt I, of neceſſity, underſtand that by theſe words I am commanded to believe contrary to my ſenſes; When, by a plain and eaſie conſtruction, agreeable to the uſual Sacramental phraſes, particularly thoſe which were uſed about the Paſſeover, my ſenſes are ſtill left unto their liberty? And no more than ſaying, *This is my Body*, That is; This Bread repreſents, or ſignifies my Body; will expreſs the ſence, and baffle the Objection. 'Tis ſo common to parallel this expreſſion, with *I am the vine, the way, the door*, and *That Rock was Chriſt*; *This is my Covenant*; *This Cup is the New Teſtament*, &c. Where the Verbs are conſtrued by *repreſented, ſignified*, and the like; That I am aſhamed we ſhould be put to continued repetitions, by the daily appearance of a baffled Adverſary. Thus we ſee, by theſe three inſtances of erroneous determinations of the Church of *Rome*, that, if ever they had infallibility, they have loſt it: Unleſs truth and error are reconciled, and infallible falſhood be a proper expreſſion.

Seventh-

Seventhly, If notwithstanding all the premisses, the *Romanists* will yet hold the conclusion, and affirm themselves to be infallible; We must call upon them to prove it by Miracles. For this can no way become the priviledge of the Church of *Rome*, but by immediate inspiration to those that pretend it; And whoever pretends to inspiration, ought to prove it by Miracle, when the Scripture does not command us to believe it. The Apostles proved their infallibility by Miracles: We must demand, therefore, the same from those that will pretend to the same priviledge; Since the promises they challenge to themselves, are compleated in the Apostles. Nay, 'twill not be enough to tell stories instead of Miracles; Nor to produce something done among them, of which, the cause being behind the Curtain, no natural account can be given: But they must be attended with such circumstances as may sufficiently prove them to be Divine. And, when this is accomplished (which is impossible), the infallibility pretended must be proved necessary to the Salvation and conduct of men: Otherwise we shall doubt of the Miracles them-

themſelves, becauſe they confirm an unneceſſary thing, and what ſuppoſes the inſufficiency of the Scriptures. I might add more Heads of Argument; but theſe are ſufficient to baffle the ſtrength of this proud Capitol.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

HAving in the former Chapter ſpent a very large Parentheſis upon the *Roman* Infallibility; for fear that I may not be well underſtood by ſome, whoſe unthinking honeſty may make them jealous of their power, and cauſe them to conclude, that I allow not Authority enough to Synods and Councils; And that being no more than a private Miniſter, I aſſume too much judgment to my ſelf, in making uſe of my faculties without leave. I anſwer, that I have ſufficient leave from the Articles and Canons eſtabliſhed in the Proteſtant Church of *England*, for what I have already wrote concerning this matter: Yet I ſhall farther explain the ſame thing; to ſhew that I am willing to attribute as much Authority and Honour to the beſt eſtabliſhed Church in the World, and the Governours of it, as any man can poſſibly

bly do who does not pluck out his eyes to do them ſervice. Therefore, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid of the *Roman* Infallibility; I readily yield that Fathers and Councils, and all Congregations of holy, and judicious Chriſtians, much more the Biſhops and Governours of the Church, ſolemnly aſſembled to treat concerning the truth or falſhood of any Point, introduced into Religion, are reverently to be attended to; Reaſon urging a regard to thoſe who, by the advantage of ſtudy, or the proſpect they have obtained from an higher ground, and according to the age in which they live, are probably capacitated to aſſiſt our judgments, and to determine a Controverſie better than our ſelves. When perſons of learning, piety, and Authority, alſo, in the Church of Chriſt ſhall aſſemble in his name, with a real intention to find out the truth of any difficult, and diſputed, Propoſition, humbly begging the Divine aſſiſtance, and bleſſing on their endeavours; We have great Reaſon to incline to their determinations, when neither ſecular intereſts, or a blind paſſion, or the force of others gains their Votes, and procures

cures their aſſent. Nay, when theſe are our own lawful Governours, (though nothing can force our belief) we may, in an improper ſence, call their determinations infallible (*quoad nos*); Becauſe, for the peace and Govern. ment of the Church, to avoid Schiſm, and to preſerve an Eccleſiaſtical union among us, it will be neceſſary that they bind us not to contradict them publickly, by any external ſolemn act, ſince we our ſelves have our aſſent virtually implied in Canons or Laws made by thoſe who publickly repreſent us: Although we are not obliged to believe every Propoſition, thus determined, to be exactly true; Unleſs it be propounded to us with ſufficient evidence to convince our judgements, if we have abilities to enquire into the Proofs themſelves. To reſtrain the external acts and diſcourſes of men, when they oppoſe the publick Sanctions, and conſtitutions of thoſe who are fixed in ſuch places of Authority, is plainly neceſſary to keep peace and order in any Society; much more in ſuch a one as is purely Chriſtian, that we may be regular and uniform in our practice; and that there may be no

no diviſions among us; And that the common Acts which we are to join in, as a Body or Society of Chriſtian men, may not be diſturbed by particular members withdrawing from them, or rendered indecent, or invalid, by noiſe, or confuſion. But yet there is no obligation upon any man to reſign either his ſenſe or reaſon in any point of which he is a capable Judge; But only to captivate it to the obedience of faith in ſuch points as are apparently revealed by God, though the points themſelves may be above the determination of the faculties of men. And therefore no Authority can oblige us to contradict the Scriptures, in their ſtanding Laws of Faith and Manners; Becauſe theſe ought to be a Law both to our Governours and our ſelves, antecedently to the Laws and Canons of men. Hence is it that we reject the pretences of aſpiring men, to any abſolute and compleat infallibility, by virtue of any promiſe ſuppoſed to be made to the Succeſſors of the Sacred Apoſtles: Becauſe there is no ſuch promiſe made to any but the Apoſtles, and the firſt Writers and Publiſhers of the Chriſtian Religion, whoſe

whoſe Writings are to be our ſtanding Rules in all things abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation: Nay, the end and deſign of the firſt Divine and infallible guidance, was only to introduce a new Law, ſuperſtructed upon the Old Law of Nature, and to free Religion from the corrupt gloſſes and cuſtoms of men, who abuſing their Authority, had falſly impoſed things on others; To obliterate the old Ceremonial injunctions preſcribed to the *Jews*; To draw the *Gentiles* from their Heathen Idolatry, and to erect the Chriſtian Church among men, that all Nations might flock to it, be ſheltered in one Fold, *being redeemed from the power of the deſtroyer*, and feed together under the Government and conduct of *Jeſus Chriſt, the great Paſtor and Biſhop of our ſouls.* Hence was it that our Saviour promiſed the immediate and infallible guidance of the Spirit to his Apoſtles, that, being before of meaner capacities, they might be able to underſtand his Laws ſo well as to publiſh them to the World, as the ſtanding Rules to all future Generations. But this rule being once compleated, by the informations which our Saviour

gave

gave to his Apoſtles whilſt he was with them; And by the continued inſpirations and aſſiſtances which they received from the holy Spirit, after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, to explain ſome things, and bring others to their remembrance, and to enable them to preach the Goſpel to the World, and to publiſh the Doctrines and Rules of it, in Writing, to be the ſtanding Law of Religion, to which all future ages might have recourſe for guidance, both in Faith and Manners: When this Law was fully and compleatly written, which was to be the great and only Rule of mens Religion, there was no need of a ſtanding infallibility, to interpret what was ſo fairly written, that in things abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, none but Ideots can poſſibly be miſtaken, and none but Knaves will endeavour to miſlead them. For there is no man, who has humility enough to uſe the help of the learned in Religion, and grace enough to implore the ordinary aſſiſtances of the Divine Spirit, (which God gives to thoſe that ask him) but, if he endeavours, with ſincerity, to live according to what he already knows,

and faithfully, and honeſtly, applies his rational faculties, to the diligent ſearch of Divine truth, he ſhall certainly attain ſuch degrees and advancements of knowledge as *ſhall be ſufficient to make him wiſe unto Salvation*, if he does not too much ſtrive to be wiſe above what is written: And if after all this, he chance to fall into any error, through the naked infirmities of human nature, it ſhall be ſuch as will be conſiſtent with the foundation; nor will it be ſo ſeverely laid to his charge, as to be the cauſe of condemning him hereafter, when it was not in his own power to help it. The Scriptures, certainly, were firſt deſigned to be the Rule of Faith and Manners. And a rule ought to be ſo plain, that all, who are to take their meaſures by it, may be able, by ſome means or other, to compare their belief and actions with the Rule, and alſo to paſs a judgment upon the whole: Nay, if we reflect upon our own rational powers, together with thoſe aſſiſtances we are directed to, and make uſe of theſe when we conſider the Scriptures themſelves, we muſt of neceſſity yield this to be true; Unleſs

leſs we will be perverſe and obſtinate in every thing. For if we think upon the quality of thoſe perſons to whom our Saviour and his Apoſtles applyed themſelves in their uſual diſcourſes, we ſhall find that they ſpake not, in their Sermons, nor wrote their Epiſtles, only to the *Rabbins* among the *Jews*, nor only to the Philoſophers among the *Gentiles*; Nor were there, at the firſt, *many Rich, or Noble, called; But the Poor had the Goſpel preached to them.* The Apoſtles declared their Doctrine, freely to the multitude; Nay, ſo did our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; And, therefore, they muſt preach it in ſuch language as all might be capable of underſtanding, and receiving, it, if prejudice did not reſiſt the impreſſion. For their deſign being to plant Chriſtianity in the World, to make Proſelytes to the Kingdom of Heaven, and, in the belief and practice of this Religion, to bring the lapſed race of men once more to God, by diſſwading them *from the error of their wayes, and by guiding their feet into the way of peace*; Why ſhould any think that they delivered the matters of mens future, and everlaſting

concerns, and the preſent Laws to guide them by, in ſo myſterious a manner, or ſuch muffled language, that the end of all their diſcourſes might be loſt by their ſpeaking unintelligibly to the people? Now ſince the ſouls of men, that are not too much hindered by a very bad conſtitution of their bodies, have all the ſame principles of Reaſon, and every Individual has a proper judgement peculiarly his own; and either we underſtand the languages, and ſchemes of ſpeech, in which the Doctrines, and Rules of life delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, were written: Or, elſe, we receive them faithfully tranſlated, (eſpecially in neceſſary Doctrines and rules, which the Criticks themſelves cannot well torture, becauſe they are oftener than once delivered) from ſeveral pious and learned men, who more perfectly and compleatly underſtood them. Why ſhould things, therefore, that were, at firſt, plain to the capacity of the meaneſt, be ſo obſcure to us, that we muſt want a guide who is infallible to direct us, almoſt, in all our wayes; and what is worſt of all, he ſplits us, at laſt, againſt

gainſt a ſtone? If God has not thought it fit to bridle mankind ſo, as to curb them from becoming ſinners, but has, in this, left them to their own choice, that if they will ſin, it may be their own act and deed; Why ſhould we think that he has chained them ſo faſt one to another, that they cannot err, or wander out of the way, unleſs they break that link which ties them all to an Infallible Chair? But, alas! ſuch is our condition here, that we may as well expect to free mankind from the commiſſion of ſin, as to reſtrain all men from error; Nay, there is as great a neceſſity that the lives of men ſhould be void of the one, as there is, that they ſhould be free from the other: As much reaſon there is *for men to be holy in all manner of converſation,* as there is for all to be found in the faith; ſince if we have faith, we may have it to our ſelves, but the actions of our lives have an influence upon others. Why, therefore, ſhould there not be an irreſiſtible power, ſet up to reſtrain men from vice, as well as a ſtanding infallibility to keep them from error? Since God then, who will judge men hereafter for thoſe things which are properly

their own, has not thought it fitting to ſet up the one, I cannot but ſuſpect that he never deſigned to fix the other, but to leave men to their own faculties, to which he has added ſufficient aſſiſtances, to judge and to chuſe fairly for themſelves; And therefore, methinks, 'tis more reaſonable to believe that, ſince men cannot pretend to both, it would be more modeſt to pretend to neither; eſpecially ſince we have no authority (whatever power any have gained or uſurped among us) from reaſon or revelation to advance any among the Race of men to be an infallible Judge in Religion, farther than his ſentence proceeds according to the Laws of the Goſpel; And by this I cannot find that he has done any more, beyond the faculties we have received as we are men, than to give us a Rule ſufficient to judge Doctrines by, and Laws by which we are to govern our practice, together with ſome ſuperadded means to help our judgments, and direct our Opinions by the Authority of Magiſtrates, who are an Ordinance of God, by the inſtructions of his Miniſters, who are alſo of Divine inſtitution, and the com-

common aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit, to guide us into all neceſſary truths, which tend to the promotion of our eternal happineſs; And ſo the final ſucceſs is left to our own liberty and choice, either in a refuſal or compliance with them; Becauſe I cannot believe but that God acts ſuitable to the nature of human creatures in all his general diſpenſations to men, that ſo he may, in our future ſtate, with equal juſtice inflict puniſhment, or give us a reward according to his promiſe. And, indeed, to (write ſtrictly) *to be found in the Faith*, would not be praiſe worthy, if it were ſo ordered, that we could not err; Nor need S. *Paul* have ſo carefully exhorted to this, if we might have been ſo eaſily preſerved from all diſeaſes, and deviations in Religion, by the infallibility of S. *Peter*, and thoſe who plead their Title from him. I am ſure that an Apoſtle acquaints the Church of *Corinth, that there muſt be alſo Hereſies among them, that they who are approved, may be made manifeſt*, (1 Cor. 11. 19.): By which he proves, and fore-tells, matter of fact, though he does not ſignifie Gods approbation; but only

his permiſſion of them; And the reaſon, why he ſuffered error and diviſion to be introduced among them by the perverſeneſs or curioſity of any, was, that ſuch as united in the true Faith might brighten, and ſhine forth with the greater glory, and like the Sun in the Firmament might triumph over Clouds and darkneſs. There is no foundation therefore to erect the Popiſh infallibility on, nor for any Church to ſet up ſuch a Tribunal among themſelves.

Having thus (as I hope) cleared my ſelf from any great and unpardonable miſcarriage in this point; I ſhall briefly proceed in reflecting upon ſome miſtakes of others, that are falſe Rules to judge Doctrines and Spirits by: Wherein private Enthuſiaſts are moſt notoriouſly guilty. Theſe ſmell Popery at a diſtance, and can hardly promote any deſign without pretending that it is ſuddenly to be introduced into the moſt Proteſtant and beſt eſtabliſhed Church in the World: But they too publickly diſcover themſelves to be Popiſhly affected, who are very apt to ſpie errors in the Pope, and yet ſo transfer them

to

to themſelves, and ſteal them away, that they may have the Monopoly of them, and retale them to others under new names, when they are in the poſſeſſion of another Maſter. Theſe will not allow the Pope to be infallible, but are apt to conclude themſelves to be ſo; And thus they fetch Candles from *Romes* Altars, that they may ſet them up in their own Breaſts: As if there were no difference betwixt *the holy Spirits guiding men into truth*, and walking by the light of their own fires: What either a diſeaſe and weakneſs in their bodies, or their minds, has made a repreſentation of to their phancies, ſo long, till their brooding thoughts have, at laſt, produced ſomething which they may juſtly call their own; Theſe things they are apt to think, or at leaſt to ſay, are the dictates of the Spirit, and accordingly they will adventure to guide themſelves, and impoſe their own enjoyed phancies upon other men: But if every thing of this nature, and mens wild diſcourſes, the effect of this, were to receive the ſtamp of Divine Authority, and become infallible guides of action; So ſtrange a confuſion

ſion would be made among us, and ſuch a monſtrous *Babel* would be erected, that Trowels would be call'd for inſtead of Morter, and men would cry out for Bricks, before they had gotten Straw to make them: Their tongues would be ſo various and unintelligible, that a *Teutonick* language could never reconcile them, nor be able to diſcover them, nor give marks to know the firſt Builders by, when they are diſperſed into divers Countries: But every mans head would ſtill tilt againſt another, and bring a kind of damnation upon the World: The Society of Devils would be more regular than men, who muſt live without God, or *Beelzebub*: The births of reaſon would be deem'd abortive, and the fruits of madneſs would receive the characters of ſobriety and diſcretion: The greateſt Lunaticks would be moſt Religious, and we ſhould pay the greateſt veneration to a Fool.

But ſince things are not come to this paſs yet; I ſhall briefly examine a very few falſe Rules, by which ſome among us ſatisfie themſelves in the tryal of Spirits, and guidance of themſelves. *Firſt*,

First, There are ſome that build much on what they ſtile the Return of prayer; when they have made a Faſt the Prologue to contention; and a long Prayer has been the Breakfaſt, when they reſolved to dine upon Widows houſes; yet they have too frequently thought, or at leaſt endeavoured, to cauſe others to believe, that what has happened after their prayer, has been the return from Heaven to it, and a ſufficient guide to future action, and an aſſurance that it was both lawful and juſt. Many men when they have for ſome time brooded upon a thing, they are apt then to petition Heaven, to inform them of the lawfulneſs or convenience, or the unlawfulneſs or inconvenience of it: And having ended their devotion, finding their thoughts to run ſtill in the ſame chanel, into which they had turned and confined them before, they conclude this to be a ſufficient warrant for them to proſecute, and accompliſh their deſign; And the eagerneſs of their intention, which proceeds only from their predeterminated reſolution, they fooliſhly take for the conduct of the Spirit, which, they are willing

ling againſt all reaſon to think, thus guides them to conclude the lawfulneſs of their deſire. And this is no inconſiderable hint, becauſe, in this method, many wicked and unlawful actions claim Gods patronage to juſtifie and defend them: And what impious, and moſt bloody deſigns have been attempted, and carried on, by the impreſſions upon mens minds, after they have pretended to ſeek the Lord, and thus gained what they have called a Return to their prayers, I need not now particularly relate; Hiſtory has reported, and will yet more diſcover them to the World: This one thing has raiſed Rebellion, Murdered Princes, in deſign and act, violated all Sacred Obligations, and layes Religion at the feet of every freſh and fanciful pretender. At this rate we ſhall cheat our neighbours by a ſecret impulſe, and murder Gods Anointed by a ſpecial command, and no man can be ſafe in his Life and Fortune, if a praying *Hector*, or a dreaming *Enthuſiaſt* has a mind, and power, to take them away: Nor will he long be without a Warrant, when by winking hard, and directing his thoughts, he may impreſs

preſs his own mind as he pleaſes, and with a melancholy, or ſturdy confidence, proclaim God to be the Author of it. But, alas! God is then only, in a true and proper ſenſe, ſaid to hear, or make returns to our prayers, when he beſtows on us, thoſe good and lawful things which we have, with humility and devotion, begg'd; And if any man, pondering on a wicked deſign of his own contrivance, in this caſe prayes to God for his direction; and, after his prayer, finds the ſinful impreſſion ſtill remaining; This proceeds from his own vicious, and Diabolical inclination, but not from the impulſe of Gods Spirit; And it can, by no reaſonable perſon, be accounted Gods anſwer to his prayers; Unleſs he will ſuppoſe the great Maker of Heaven and Earth, to be willing to offer the greateſt violence to his own nature, and to nurſe and cheriſh, what he would hate in himſelf, in thoſe who are the *workmanſhip of his* own *hands*. No greater reproach can be given to the Divine Majeſty than this, by thoſe who acknowledge, and adore, his Being: For they make him the Patron to mens ſins; as if his eſſential purity and goodneſs could

could permit him to inſtigate any to the commiſſion of thoſe things, which his juſtice, notwithſtanding, muſt, and cannot chuſe but, puniſh: Such apprehenſions of the Supreme God, would, oftentimes, make the *Authour of peace*, to be guilty of the worſt War, and the ſhedding the beſt blood in a Kingdom; The God of Order, would become the cauſe of the greateſt confuſions among mankind, and, in plain terms, give himſelf the Lye. It cannot be ſafe, therefore, to make what we are apt to call an anſwer to our prayers, a rule of actions, unleſs they agree with Gods written word, and then there will be no need of a new Warrant; For the word of God as it is the beſt, ſo it muſt be to us the only, general direction in our taking the meaſures of good and evil.

If, at any time, the following ſtrong impreſſions made upon our minds may be ſafe to guide us, after we have ſought to God for particular directions, it muſt, as I conceive, be only in things that were indifferent before, that he may influence our prudential choice in matters which he has left

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to our own option: And, even in this caſe, we muſt have a care that we do not fully reſolve before-hand, leſt we are found to be diſſemblers with God, and have no real heſitation in our own judgments; But if, in ſuch things, we have occaſion to make any applications to him, we muſt be ſure to leave room for his direction, and that we know not which way to determine our ſelves by any of the Laws of Good and Evil: The lawfulneſs of either part muſt be evident, and we muſt deſire an influence on the government of our choice only in the prudential determination, with reference to the good conſequence, or ſucceſs. I cannot apprehend that any evil can attend this, it being a ſolemn acknowledgement of a Supreme Being, who has the Government of the whole World, of our own weakneſs, and inability to guide our ſelves without his aſſiſtance, and conſequently of our dependence on him, which are great reaſons for our adorations and prayers: But yet the good that may, in particular, attend the purſuance of this muſt be left to Gods ſecret conduct, and to the intrigues and influence of his pro-

providence, which no man is able to diſcover; Unleſs he could pry into the conſults of Heaven, and diſcloſe the ſecrets of an infinitely wiſe, and powerful Being, when, beſides what he has already revealed, there is not a key-hole to peep through. For my own part, I love not to be wiſe above what is written, or to be bold in preſcribing Rules in thoſe caſes in which God has been pleaſed to give us none; but ſhall confine my ſelf to the Law and to the Teſtimony, and look upon the Scripture as my certain Rule, thus guiding my ſelf in this World, that I may at laſt through Gods mercy and the Merits of my Redeemer arrive at my proportioned glory in the next.

But, *Secondly*, Another falſe Rule of trying Opinions, Doctrines, and reſolutions in Religion, ſet up by ſome, is every mans private judgement and determination; When, in the mean time, it takes not its meaſures from Gods Word, nor the general notions of Good and Evil, but from a peculiar, private Spirit got into a ſingle mans thoughts and apprehenſions. Now to this head may be reduced what

what mad-men call lights, and revelations; What thoſe Enthuſiaſts, that will be Saints in ſpight of all their prophane actions, and dub themſelves Holy in the midſt of their own irreligion, call Conſcience; And what others, of a more ſmooth and gentle diſpoſition, ſtile Reaſon, that they may advance the powers of mankind to the degrading, if not expelling, the benign operations of the Holy Spirit of God. In a word; This ſeems to be the foundation of judgement, and the Rule of diſcerning Spirits and Doctrines amongſt *Quakers*, *Anabaptiſts*, *Independents*, and the reſt of our Separatiſts (ſpeaking in the general), of all that follow the *Socinian* Principles, and is the foundation of Popery it ſelf, when thoſe of the *Roman* Communion miſtake the reſult of their Governours Opinions, enacted into Laws, for the true dictates of the Holy Ghoſt inſpiring the Pope, or preſiding at their Councils, and infallibly aſſiſting in their determinations. But none of theſe things taken as they are propounded, can poſſibly be a ſafe Rule, much leſs, the higheſt conduct in matters of Religion: When we ſhall con-

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ſider, that though they may be helps to judge upon the view of the Rule; Yet phancy and opinion may frequently be miſtaken for reaſon, illumination, Conſcience, nay, the dictates of the holy Spirit it ſelf; and, according to the common inferences about theſe matters, are ſo concluded, and believed by men that conſult their own faculties. But this will yet be more evident if we conſider, (1.) That the holy Spirit of God does not, in any ages, ſince he inſpired thoſe that delivered the Scriptures to be the rule of life, either illuminate, or direct mankind in the things relating to their eternal peace, in any other manner, than (1.) By thoſe Scriptures (allowing the faculties of human nature, and the general propoſitions of Religion among mankind) which he inſpired the Sacred Pen-men to record. (2.) By inclining as well as authorizing ſome men, being prepared by education and ſtudy, to continue a ſucceſſion of that Miniſtry, which our Saviour appointed, *to endure to the end of the World*, to explain the difficulties in Religion unto others: And (3.) Confirming by a

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ſecret and inexplicable operation (which is eaſily believed by all that affirm Gods Grace, or Providence; and in conſequence his Being) the propoſitions contained in the Scriptures unto the minds of men, and inclining their faculties to believe and embrace them; Which influence is obtained by prayer, (to him that is of a docil diſpoſition) as well as given in our Sacred Baptiſm, till ſuch time as we either reſiſt or renounce it, all which ſhall be more evident, before I make an end. Now none of theſe, (though great priviledges) can intitle any to that illumination, or immediate guidance, which wild men make the rule of their faith, and conductor of their actions; But they may miſtake (and be confident in it) their own phancy and high opinion, proceeding either from thoughtfulneſs or diſpoſition, for immediate motions from the Spirit of God. And (2). As for the conſciences of men, if they miſtake them not for phancy, opinion, or a ſtrong perſuaſion of their own minds: they are nothing but the agreement of our judgements with Gods word, (for thus much

much συνείδησις imports, which is knowledge with another, and includes the relation of our underſtandings to a Rule: Theſe are ſo far therefore from being a rule themſelves, that they are to be governed by another, and cannot be proper conſciences without it: Being therefore guided by a Superiour Rule, they cannot be ſafe conductors themſelves; and if conſcience, (as taken by thoſe that plead hardeſt for it) were once allowed its full latitude; phancy, intereſt, and the humours and impious miſtakes of men would paſs for conſcience, and a ſafe guide, and introduce ſuch a medly and mixture in Religion, that every one, under the covert of this, would do what is good in his own eyes; even as when *there was no King in Iſrael*; The Church of Chriſt would be turned into a *Babel*, and our houſes of *Prayer*, *into dens of Thieves*, being fill'd with nothing but Sacriledge and confuſion.

Thirdly, Some make ſuch Providence as crowns their opinions with ſucceſs, to be an argument that their opinions are true: But to evince the invalidity of this needs no other than this

this obſervation; That when the ſame things are covered with a Cloud, their Authors puniſhed, or the propagation of their tenets becomes improſperous, the ſame men will not admit of the ſame argument; Nor permit others to defend their opinions by the ſame *medium*, with which they prov'd their own. *When the Sun for a ſeaſon ſhines upon them, and the Heavens ſmile; then, behold! the hand of the Lord is with them:* But when a proſperous ray refreſhes others, and they receive not the countenance they had before, but have the frowns and diſcouragements of Superiors: Behold now! wickedneſs is ſeated in high places; The holy Seed are led into the Wilderneſs, and perſecution attends the Elect of God, and *Canaanites* poſſeſs the Holy Land. But, if ſucceſs were an argument for inſpiration, and ſmiling Providences a rule to judge Doctrines by; *Numa Pompilius* might have had an argument for the inſpirations from his Nymph *Ægeria*, and for the truth of his Religion he eſtabliſh'd among the *Romans*: The *Jews* might have been loſt in the Wilderneſs, and have iu-

ſtified the making their Gods to go before them: They had ceaſed to have the marks of a Church, and would not have been the people of the Lord, when they were carried into *Egypt* or *Babylon*: Nay, by this, they might have juſtified their condemning the great *Meſſiah*; and *Pilate*, and the *Roman* Guards, might have had an argument for executing him: The Primitive Chriſtians muſt be condemned, and the Apoſtles inſpiration be proved an impoſture, if a dark Providence be that, by which the Doctrines of men are to be judg'd: *Mahomet* muſt have been deemed a true Prophet, when he gathered ſo many Proſelytes in the *Eaſt*; And the great *Turk* be yet as holy, as he has been for the moſt part proſperous in the World: Nay Popery it ſelf, muſt then be embraced, if the glory and proſperity of opinions muſt prove them true, and ſucceſs becomes the meaſure of Religion: This is a way to juſtifie all lucky Uſurpations; To determine right and wrong by combate; and the longeſt Sword may juſtly meaſure out the largeſt Poſſeſſion, and the property of mankind, muſt

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ſubmit to power: A Rebel then may lawfully poſſeſs his Sovereings Throne, if he has ſtrength enough to force the brighteſt Majeſty to an exchange; And if this principle be fully purſued, the men that own it, may bow the Knee, and ſay to an Uſurper, *God ſave the King*: This will make, many times, the greateſt Villany to have more Authority, than Virtue and Innocence, and force true Religion to be vanquiſhed by a falſe: Nay, he that by this rule is taken for a Prophet to day, may be an Impoſtor to morrow, though he continues in the delivery of the ſame Doctrine; Becauſe a man may receive *Hoſanna's from the multitude*, and their cry ſhall ſhortly be, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him!*: Theſe things are the ſubject of common obſervation; It was holy *Davids* long ago; And it will be ſo to the end of the world, (whatever *Jews* or *Millenaries* may dream); That the wicked will ſometimes be in great power, when the righteous hang down their head like a bulruſh: When the *Pſalmiſt* ſpake of the proſperity of the wicked; He obſerv'd, for ſome time, *that there were no bands in their death, but their*

strength was firm and sound; *They were not in trouble like other men*; but plagued less than those that were better: *Therefore pride compass'd them as a chain, and violence covered them as a garment, their eyes stood out with fatness, and they had more than heart could wish*, (Psal. 73.). And *Solomon* observes, that, as to the changes of prosperity and adversity, *all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked*; *to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not*; *As is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath*, (Eccles. 9. 2.): This indeed may prove that there shall be a future account; But neither can the goodness or wickness of a party be evidenced by such external characters; much less the truth or falshood of opinions, confirmed from the smiles or frowns of Providence. But I need not at present argue this point farther; since those that when prosperous, invented it as a rule to walk by, and as an argument to confirm their party, and a bait to draw Proselytes, and Abettors, to them, are now confuted by their shameful overthrow; And it would sink them

them more, ſhould it be uſed with any ſevere enlargement, ſince their honour layes in the duſt, and I hope it will never riſe again. I ſhall leave this therefore as a term of Religion, and a fallible rule only taken up to ſerve a turn, and proceed to thoſe methods and ways, by which we may diſcern true Doctrines from falſe inſpirations.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

AND (*Firſt*,) As to the Trial of the Doctrines and Opinions of thoſe that vent them with great confidence and zeal, as if they were divinely inſpired; we muſt conſider, that thoſe to whom theſe Doctrines are propounded, are reaſonable creatures; And this will be yielded without any reaſoning about it, unleſs we have a mind to degrade our ſelves, as well in ſpeculation, as many do in practice, to the beaſts that periſh: nay, any objection formally framed againſt this ſuppoſal, would prove what the Objector endeavours to deny, that men had diſcurſive faculties, and his own confutation would be included in his Objection, whilſt that would prove him able to ſyllogize, and reaſon.

Secondly, Men being rational and intelligent beings, it follows, that they are able to diſcern the truth or falſehood of propoſitions, ſufficiently propounded to their conſideration, in terms that

that exceed not the expreſſions of the ſenſe of one man to another; and in matters that are not elevated above humane capacities; our diſcourſes otherwiſe to one another, would be no more, than the chirping of Birds, the ſpeech of Parrots, or the jabbering of Monkeys to each other; and would be nothing more than an uncertain diſtinct ſound, without any ſignification.

Thirdly, We muſt conſider too, that it is not ſuitable to the Nature of God to impoſe upon the faculties of men, ſo as to delude and cheat them with any equivocal and falſe propoſitions; eſpecially when he deſigns them as a Rule to men to guide them in their concerns and actions in this World, or in the way to their everlaſting peace: Becauſe the notion men have of him, the truth of which he has evidenced to the World, renders him a Being of all poſſible perfection; otherwiſe we ſhould ſuppoſe God to be liable to the common frailties and infirmities of men. Now, if he be ſupreamly perfect, he muſt, according to our own reaſon, and thoſe faculties that are implanted in us, be one of infinite Truth and Goodneſs, If he be the firſt, he will not deliver

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propoſitions unto men, that are plainly, or more obſcurely, falſe; And, if he be a good Being, he will not give Rules that may deceive us, if we uſe thoſe faculties he has beſtowed on us, to find out their meaning and intention; The contrary to this would cheat the World, and then he would make creatures (or at leaſt ſeem to do it) that he might, with great circumſtance and ſolemnity, ſubtilly lead them into eternal ruine; Which to ſuppoſe, is as great blaſphemy againſt the Divine Nature, as can be invented by the worſt of creatures that have made themſelves malicious; And as foul an infamy as can be caſt upon Gods being, by the worſt of men; ſince *he deſires not the death of ſinners themſelves; but rather that they ſhould return from their wickedneſs and live:* This is confirmed by thoſe threats he denounces againſt them to frighten them from eternal ruine; by all thoſe promiſes he has annex'd to repentance; by all his exhortations to them to amend their lives; by all the inſtruments and helps to Religion which he has graciouſly afforded them, by all that ſorrow and trouble he expreſſes whilſt

whilſt men remain in that ſtate of ſin which entitles them to eternal miſery; And by ſending his only Son into the World, to offer himſelf a Sacrifice for them; that Divine Wrath and Juſtice being appeaſed, they might be capable, according to the Rules and Directions he propoſed, and the Aids and Aſſiſtances he has given them, to recover themſelves out of thoſe ſnares in which they were entangled, and to guide themſelves into the way of peace.

Fourthly, From hence it follows, that there are ſufficient Means and Wayes afforded us, by which we may, as reaſonable creatures, judge of true directions and falſe; ſo that we may not ſpend our time in uncertainties in matters of ſuch vaſt and infinite concernment. Gods promiſe of Heaven and eternal bliſs, would be to us totally inſignificant, if it were made either upon ſuch conditions as we knew not, or had not ſufficient abilities with his influence to perform them: And to what purpoſe would it be, to tell the World, that *in keeping Gods Commandments, there is great reward*, if we knew not what the Commandments were?

were? We could not make ſenſe of that Thankſgiving of our Saviour, (*Matth.* 11. 25.) *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent*, (the *Rabbies* amongſt the *Jews*, and the *Philoſophers* among the *Gentiles*) *and haſt revealed them unto babes*; to perſons of a more inferiour rank and capacity; if thoſe whom he here calls Babes, had not means to know the certainty of the Revelation, and to arrive at compleat and diſtinct notions of the things that were revealed; And in vain would it have been for S. *Paul* to have ſpoken *the hidden things of God in a myſterie*; (the Doctrine of Chriſts coming into the World, hid under *Jewiſh* Types and Shadows, and obſcurely treated of by the Prophets, in compariſon to the Light which then appeared) or to have treated of ſuch Doctrines of the Goſpel, which diſcovered things, *which neither eye had ſeen, nor ear heard, nor did* they *even enter into the heart of man*, when God revealed them by his Spirit (1 *Cor.* 2.) and not by any Logical demonſtration; which blinded the Governours amongſt the

Jews,

Jews, and confounded the Philoſophers among the *Greeks*, who, according to their accuſtomed way of proof, expected another method of probation, than the *demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power*: It had been, notwithſtanding, an impoſſible attempt for the Apoſtle to have endeavoured to reduce any of theſe, or other men, that knew themſelves to be endued with reaſon, to the belief of the Goſpel, which was proved Divine by the teſtimony and revelation of the Spirit, if ſufficient means were not afforded them to know, and diſtinguiſh Divine Revelation, from impoſture and pretences. The things delivered were above the reach of humane reaſonings, and Philoſophy then gave check to their belief, and cuſtom and education had impreſs'd them with different, nay, contrary notions of things: It muſt be ſuppoſed therefore, antecedently to their reception of the Goſpel, that as S. *Paul* was able to give them evidence, that thoſe Doctrines he delivered to them, were revealed from Heaven, ſo there were ſome Methods and Rules, by which they might be able to know the revelation, and not receive it upon his bare teſtimony:

testimony: Nay, to what purpose would it be for S. *John* to direct men to *try the Spirits*, if we had not sufficient means to know, *whether they were from God*, or no?

Fifthly, This must be granted too, that there are false Pretensions and Doctrines of men vented in the World, under the notion of true; And true and false under the same pretence of inspiration: The Apostle tells us, that *many false Prophets are gone out into the world*: And our Saviour (to prevent a rash belief, and thereby an Apostasie from the Gospel, or trusting in another *Messiah*,) acquaints the World, that there would *arise false Christs* and *false Prophets*, (*Mark* 13. 22.): And therefore they should not believe and entertain them, although according to their different principles and designs, they should cry out, *Lo! here is Christ*; or *Lo! there*: And S. *Peter* tells us, that, as there were false Prophets formerly amongst the people, so there should be false Teachers among the Christians, who should *privily bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them*; and, that *many should follow their pernicious*

cious wayes: (2 *Pet.* 2. 1, 2.). Nay, S. *Paul* tells us of thoſe, who, in a *voluntary humility*, and *worſhipping of Angels*, intruded into thoſe things which they *never ſaw*; being *vainly puffed up in their fleſhly minds*; who, yet, departed from the head, Chriſt himſelf who is the head of the Church; making the coming to God by the Mediatory application to an Angel, a demonſtration of their humility, and ſo rejecting the interceſſion of our Saviour *the only Mediator betwixt God and man*, (*Col.* 2. 18.). But our own Age is ſo fruitful in examples of this kind, that the poſſibility of mens falſe pretences to revelation, and of their venting corrupt Doctrines to the World, needs no other argument to prove it, than our own experience; Nor need we rake in the duſt of falſe Prophets, in paſt Ages, when we have, to our great grief and trouble, living monuments, on which theſe things are to be read, and ſeen.

Yet (*Sixthly*,) Notwithſtanding all this, we muſt maintain that there is ſuch a thing as true inſpiration; This is plainly implied by *S. John*, to whom I muſt adhere; For it would be ill

Logick to infer that, becauſe the Apoſtle adviſeth us not *to believe every Spirit*, therefore we ſhould give credit unto none; But rather that ſome are to be believed: Eſpecially when we take in his direction with it; *Try the Spirits whether they are of God:* This argues that ſome Doctrines came from Heaven, and ſome men were inſpired from above, although *many falſe Prophets were gone abroad into the world.* Should the contrary be held by any among us, it would not only invalidate the Doctrine of *Moſes*, and the Prophets under the Old Teſtament; But of Chriſt, and his Apoſtles under the New; it would conclude the intercourſe betwixt God and men to be an impoſſible Chimera, and turn all Divinity into a Fable; And at once render our time miſ-ſpent and loſt, whilſt I am writing, and others reading ſuch Doctrines as theſe, and all diſputes concerning any poſitive and inſtituted Religion, the fooliſh talkings and inventions of men, that buſie themſelves to deceive others, and give trouble to their own fleſh; When mans reaſon might ſupply all: But ſuch a phancy I ſuppoſe to be too wild

wild and extravagant, to be admitted in ſuch an age of the world as this; Eſpecially among thoſe, who have frequented Chriſtian Aſſemblies, and have heard diſcourſes, proving the truth of the Old Teſtament, or the New; That have read the *Jews* Arguments for their Law, or the Chriſtian Fathers Apologizing for the Religion of the Goſpel: Nor indeed, can any deny the truth of Gods converſing with men, that reject not his Omnipotence; or elſe doubt of the nature and capacity of their own ſouls: To be ſure they muſt deny the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and affirm all his appearances to men to be a fable; Since from them we are aſſured, that *all Scripture was given by inſpiration from God*, (2 Tim. 3. 16.). And therefore to men, that acknowledge this, I muſt be ſuppoſed to direct this diſcourſe, as well as S. *John* does in the Text ſo frequently recited, who ſuppoſes that there is a Divine inſpiration, before he adviſes men to ſeparate the pretences of falſe Prophets, from the Doctrines of thoſe that are true: 'Tis in vain otherwiſe to perſwade men to exerciſe their faculties,

aſſiſted by Rules; or to make any diſcrimination at all, where there is no foundation for the concluſion of a difference.

Seventhly, Therefore, The trial of the Doctrines and Rules of men pretending inſpiration, having thus far been brought on towards a concluſion: The determination of our aſſent and choice in matters of ſuch huge and vaſt moment, on which the welfare of our ſouls depends, muſt be directed by what, ſufficiently, without fallacy, evidences thoſe Doctrines which we receive from others, or are led into the belief of from our own reaſonings, are certainly ſuch as came from God, and that we are not impoſed upon by our own temperament, or the ſubtilty of others: The evidence therefore for a Divine revelation muſt be greater and ſtronger than any argument framed to the contrary; Becauſe in all the diſcoveries of truth, my belief is to be determined according to evidence, and the greateſt probability guides the rational choice of men; And all that act ſuitably to themſelves, embrace the propoſition that comes neareſt to truth and certain-

tainty: But where two things ſeem equal in their proof, a rational man only heſitates and doubts, and gives up his aſſent to neither: And therefore had the Magicians of *Egypt* equall'd the Miracles *Moſes* wrought in the preſence of *Pharaoh*, as well as they did in turning rods into Serpents, and Rivers into blood, and cauſing Froggs to come up before him; They need not, at that time, have acknowledg'd *Moſes*'s power diſproportionable to their own, nor diſtinguiſhed their own Miracles from his, by ſaying, *This is the finger of God*; And *Pharaoh* himſelf might have had an equal argument to detain the *Iſraelites*, as they had for the command of God to depart out of the Land of *Egypt*. But when the Miracles on their ſide, far exceeded the Wonders on the other, his own reſolution became his Law, and *Pharaohs* obſtinacy ſtill increaſed, till it was the ruine of himſelf and followers, who all periſhed in the *Red Sea*. *Ahab* forſook the commandments of God, and worſhipped *Baalim*, and led the people into Idolatry, joyning the Service of *Baal with the God of Iſrael*; And thus halted be-

twixt two opinions, till the trial betwixt their Sacrifices was determined on *Elijah*'s ſide, who was the Prophet of the Lord; Whilſt fire came down from Heaven, and conſumed the Sacrifice upon Gods own Altar, which *Baal* could not effect on his: But then the people determined their choice, and gave their aſſent, *that the Lord is God*; and preſently ſlew the Prophets of *Baal*, for whom before they had great eſteem, (1 *Kings* 18*th Chap.*). Hence was it alſo that our Saviour ſaid concerning the *Jews*, who, by Miracles evidencing *Moſes*'s Commiſſion, had juſtly received the Law of *Moſes*; That if he had not ſuperſeded their Religious Cuſtoms, which till his coming were juſtly eſtabliſhed, by ſhewing his Authority, and Goſpel, to be Divine, by greater Miracles than thoſe that introduced and eſtabliſhed the Law, they had done well to adhere to it, and to look upon the Goſpel as an impoſture: Becauſe, a new Doctrine pretending to be Divine, and evacuating that which, having proof from Heaven, was eſtabliſhed before, muſt be confirmed with greater Miracles, than that which

which it pretends to aboliſh: *Therefore* (ſayes our Saviour) *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin,* (John 15. 24.). Which way of trial will (by the way) hold good to the end of the World: From all which, it is plainly manifeſt, that all the Opinions and Doctrines of men, pretending to inſpiration, if they are rationally to be received by us, muſt come with ſuch Evidence and Authority, as may ſurmount all difficulties and Objections to the contrary. So that if any men ſhould now pretend Miracles to give teſtimony to any Opinions that contradict the Doctrines of the New Teſtament, they are not ſufficient to command our aſſent, and to determine our belief; Unleſs they are greater than any which Chriſt and his Apoſtles did, to confirm their Doctrine, which theſe new Opinions do oppoſe and contradict.

Eighthly, In this trial of men pretending inſpiration for the Doctrines they deliver, we muſt be ſure that the evidence they give for ſuch inſpiration, be peculiarly Divine, and ſuch as cannot be given to men by any

thing inferiour to the power of God. It is not the grave deportment of the inſpired; nor the colour or ſhape of their faces; Nor the ſeeming innocence of their own lives, extraordinary auſterities, or a leſs decent, and moroſe, living, that retires them from the converſation of the World; It is not a peculiar habit; nor any uncouth or ſluttiſh garments; 'tis neither feeding upon *Locuſts* and *wild Honey*; nor yet *eating with Publicans and Sinners*, that proves a Prophet to be Divine: Nor is it a full and copious expreſſion, attended with abundance of zeal and paſſion; nor, yet, a ſlow and pumping delivery, as if their notions were too bigg for their words, and their words too large for their mouths, that will evidence them to come from God: 'Tis neither their natural parts, or acquired ornaments; the antiquity of error, nor the glory, or number of thoſe that are proſelyted to it; 'tis neither the rendring error plauſible by diſtinction, nor glozing it over with miſrepreſented teſtimonies of others, or pretending ſome latent Authority from the moſt obſcure places of the Scripture, or rendring thoſe ob-

obſcure, to countenance their Doctrine, that are plain and open to the contrary, that muſt lead us from Divine truth, into Diabolical error, and make the God of truth to patronize a lye. In a word; 'Tis not an Argument from the ſucceſs an Opinion has in the world, (though Providence, thereby, ſeems, with ſome, to be entitled to it) nor any countenance from the Authority of men, nor the iterated affirmations of him that pretends to be thus inſpired, that are ſufficient to prove his Doctrines true: Becauſe all theſe things have frequently been publick atteſtations to thoſe that are falſe: But there muſt be ſuch evidence to thoſe Propoſitions which are pretended to come immediately from God, as that by which he has always confirmed his Laws to the world; Something beyond the power of nature, that cannot be parallel'd by men or Devils; The Broad Seal of Heaven muſt be annex'd, that neither nature nor art is able to counterfeit.

And this (*Ninthly*,) muſt be real Miracles, (in which the Spirit of Prophecy is included.) There have been many wonders effected in the world, and

and more ſtories of theſe than are true, which the *Romaniſts* glory as much in, as if they were Miracles, if their art can hide their craft & ſubtilty from thoſe that are more curious and inquiſitive: The Pagan Prieſts led the van, aſſiſted by the power of ſubtil *Dæmons*, to gain the peoples worſhip to themſelves, or to thoſe Images which they animated, and moved: And how far the *Romaniſts* have followed them in this cheat and impoſture, has been ſometimes too apparently diſcovered; And would be more, would they but be as ingenuous in their confeſſions, as they are witty in their ſubtil, though impious, inventions. The philoſophical knowledge of natural cauſes, together with an induſtrious application, will make ſome extraordinary and unuſual effects look like Miracles: For the moſt of men, being, by reaſon of an inferiour education, ignorant of many effects of Art and Nature, which men of more refined underſtandings eaſily diſcover the cauſes of, are apt to attribute thoſe things to the immediate operation of the firſt cauſe, which are reſults from thoſe that are ſecond; Art will do much, and Nature more; And

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the Devil, many times, makes more ſtrange and unuſual appearances, being aſſiſted with the knowledge of both: And how many times do men admire the ſlight of a Jugler, till, perhaps, they make diſcovery of his Craft; and attribute that to the power of the Devil, which he ingeniouſly does by ſlight of hand? Nay, the ſport that Devils make in the Air, we often take as the voice of Gods Thunder, and tremble, and are afraid at the Storm: But, yet, there is as much difference betwixt true Miracles, and very real Wonders, as there is betwixt Heaven and Hell; or the power of Nature, and that which firſt made and continues it, who can either ſuſpend its power, or alter its effects. Or as there is betwixt Nature and Art, which though the latter imitates, it can never equal; no more than the former vye with the God of Nature: Miracles (eſpecially ſuch as are above the power of any thing inferiour unto God) have alwayes been receiv'd by men, as ſufficient atteſtations of Divine Truths: Theſe were thoſe Divine Teſtimonies, by which the bleſſed *Jeſus* evidenced his Commiſſion to the World,

World, and added Gods authority to the reaſonableneſs of his Doctrine. When S. *John the Baptiſt* ſent his Diſciples to him, to know whether he were the *Meſſiah*, of which he knew himſelf to be Fore-runner; our Saviour returned no anſwer but this, *Go your way* (ſayes he), *and tell* John *what things ye have ſeen and heard; how that the blind ſee, the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed, to the poor the Goſpel is preached:* (*Luke* 7. 22.): By this intimating, that ſuch Miracles were ſufficient to convince him that he was the *Meſſiah*, to whom ſuch power was given from above: Thus he endeavours alſo to convince the *Jews* by the argument of his Miracles; *The ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me*— (*John* 5. 36.). Now, as by this argument our Saviour proved his own Commiſſion; ſo when he ſent forth his Apoſtles and the firſt Planters of his Religion into the World, he gave to them the ſame power to work Miracles for confirmation of their Doctrine. *Heal the ſick* (ſayes he) *cleanſe the lepers, raiſe the dead, caſt out Devils*, (*Matth.* 10. 8.): And accordingly

dingly they proved their Doctrine to be Divine, and confirmed their Commiſſions to the World; preaching (as S. *Paul* did, (1 *Cor.* 2. 4.) not ſo much by Logical argument, or in the manner of the *Grecian* Philoſophers way of reaſoning; *But in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power*: When they argued from the Old Teſtament to the New, and did Miracles to confirm all. This has been Gods method, in the World, of evidencing his Miſſion of Prophets unto men, to declare his Meſſages to them, by which he atteſted his own inſpirations; which, the moſt confident affirmations of the perſons inſpired, without ſuch plain and publick atteſtations, could never have created a belief of; Eſpecially if they delivered Articles of Faith, and things not demonſtrable to the reaſon of mankind. Thus when God gave *Moſes* authority to lead, and preſide over the *Iſraelites*, he endued him with a power to work Miracles to atteſt his Commiſſion (*Exod.* 4.): And when the Prophets were to make any new Revelation to Princes or people; or when God ſent them on any ſtrange errand, he added confirmation to their

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authority, by giving them power to fore-tell ſomething which he brought to paſs; or elſe to work ſome extraordinary Sign, or Miracle; that thoſe to whom the Meſſage was ſent, might be convinced, that God ſent the Prophet.

But yet, becauſe it is often ſo difficult for men to diſtinguiſh betwixt a Miracle and a Wonder, who know not the utmoſt power of Art or Nature; Eſpecially, they are ignorant of the skill and force of Devils; God has ſtill (in the laſt place) given Rules for our farther direction in this weighty affair; That the fancies of men may not by any ſubtilty whatſoever be impos'd upon with the ſeeming authority of Divine Inſpiration: God knew that the Devil would endeavour in this to imitate the Divine Power, as well as *appear like an Angel of light*, when either might impoſe deluſions upon the World; That the art and induſtry of deſigning men, might, by a previous acquaintance with Natural Cauſes, ſo alter their ſimplicity by mixtures and experiment; or meet with ſuch a ſtrange diſpoſition of nature, lucky to them, as by the application of theſe,

theſe, to the preſent conjunction of their own intentions, they might take advantage to inſinuate their ſubtile and falſe Doctrines into the minds of the vulgar, or credulous, and many times into thoſe that were more rational and learned; Or elſe by a fortunate prediction of ſomething that might come to paſs, aſſume to themſelves the honour and authority of Prophets, and then impoſe upon, and delude, the World. For the prevention, therefore, of ſuch great, and otherwiſe, unavoidable miſchiefs; the moſt gracious God, out of his infinite love to mankind, has given them three other Rules, by which they might, and may, meaſure Prophets and their Doctrines. (1.) If any pretended their authority by fore-telling things to come; If they fail'd in any of their Predictions, 'twas a ſign that God never ſent them to deliver that, which the Prediction was an argument to confirm: And that, not only becauſe the great God never confirms his Truths to the World by falſhood or deceit: But, becauſe he has cautioned us not to believe them: In the 18*th* of *Deut. v.* 22. *When a Prophet ſpeaketh*

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in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to paſs, this is the thing which the Lord hath not ſpoken; but the Prophet hath ſpoken it preſumptuouſly; Thou ſhalt not be afraid of him.

(2.) Suppoſing that one who took upon him the name of a Prophet, and ſhould work Wonders (as *Antichriſt* and others under the New Teſtament) for confirmation of his Doctrine and Authority; Yet, if his Doctrines tend to the evacuating principles implanted in the minds of men, and deſtroying the reaſonable propoſitions of the Natural Religion of mankind; it was an apparent ſign of a falſe Prophet. *For*, ſayes the Text, *If there ariſe among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a ſign or a wonder, and the ſign or the wonder come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let us go after other Gods, which thou haſt not known, and let us ſerve them; Thou ſhalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of dreams, Deut.* 13. at the beginning.

(3.) In relation to both Natural, and Inſtituted, Worſhip; God having now given us a Rule, no pretenſion of Prophecy, or Miracle, muſt ever draw us into

into the opinions of men that thwart or contradict the Divine Eſtabliſhments already confirmed by the ſame argument; And this is evident, partly from that fore-quoted Text (*Deut.* 13.), where the reaſons, why that falſe Prophet ſhould not be received, that endeavoured to draw men from the innate Principles of Natural Religion are; (1.) Becauſe God, by permitting that falſe Prophet, proved mens ſtedfaſtneſs in Religion. (2.) Becauſe, whatever Signs and Wonders were done to confirm a Doctrine, men were ſo far to adhere to the true God, as to *walk after him*, and *to fear him, to keep his commandments, to obey his voice, to ſerve, and to cleave unto, him.* But this is yet more fully proved from *Iſa.* 8. 20. When any ſhould endeavour to draw the people unto Wizards, and to ſuch as had familiar Spirits; The Prophet adviſes them to *try* all by the *Law* and the *Teſtimony*; becauſe, *if any ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them.* And if theſe directions were good under the Law, much more will they ſatisfie any reaſonable men under the Goſpel; this being the laſt publick

declaration of Gods Will, that he intends to make to mankind, till the final period and general diſſolution: *For though we*, ſayes the Apoſtle, *or an Angel from heaven preach any other Goſpel, let him be accurſed* (*Gal.* 1. 8.). And he tells the World, that, at the final period, *God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men according to the Goſpel*, (*Rom.* 2. 16.). Therefore the Goſpel is to be the ſtanding Law to the end of the World: Nor needs there any other, it being the end of the *Moſaick* Conſtitutions, and ſuch a compleat Syſtem of Divinity, as is ſufficient to *make a man perfect, throughly furniſhed to every good work*, and thereby to prepare him for that *eternal inheritance, that fadeth not away*. And thus I have now conſidered all the chief parts of what I deſign, and with all faithfulneſs, according to my knowledge, diſcharg'd my ſelf: The diſcourſe on ſuch a point has been long: but I hope it will not prove unuſeful, in ſuch times as theſe, in which truth is blended and beſet with error. Strange Doctrines have inſinuated into the minds of men; And we are now ſailing betwixt *Sylla* and *Charybdis*,

Charybdis, and God knows, which may ſwallow us: When truth, like pure and clean Wheat, is put betwixt two Mill-ſtones, that ſeem to joyn to grind it in pieces: And Religion, like our Saviour upon the Croſs, is almoſt crucified betwixt two Thieves: But bleſſed be God, his Providence is over all his works, and through his help, we hope for deliverance, from all our troubles; For vain is the help of man without him.

CHAP. X.

HAving hitherto, for the moſt part, treated concerning Falſe Spirits, and argued againſt the pretences to inſpiration among *Papiſts* and *Fanaticks*; and given ſome directions, by which we may be able to diſcern what inſpiration is true, and what falſe: That it may not be objected againſt the body of this Diſcourſe, that I have left neither Soul, nor Spirit, to animate it; but have hinted only ſome operation of the Divine Spirit, and reſtrained that to the firſt Age of the Chriſtian Religion, as if it were not needful for future Generations, to guide men into all truth: I ſhall ſpend ſome Sheets to prove, That as there were Promiſes that the Holy Spirit of God ſhould conduct men after our Saviours Aſcenſion; ſo that theſe Promiſes were made good, by the apparent Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt; And to ſhew, in what manner the Sacred Spi-

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rit informed the Apoſtles, and the firſt Publiſhers of the Chriſtian Doctrines; And how he ſtill influences the minds of men in the underſtanding, and receiving, them.

The Wilderneſs of this World is very thick of Briars and Thorns, that ſcratch and tear the Church of Chriſt in her paſſage through it; And ſince the moſt who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians agree in the deſign, and end, of their journey; Yet becauſe we are apt to fall out by the way, and differ about the determination of the paths that lead thither; Hence is it, that I have hitherto endeavoured to hinder men of good intentions, and different judgements, from entertaining a deluſion, by reaſon of any ſhortneſs in their ſight; that they may not be deceived by their own fancies, or the ſuggeſtions of others, and ſo miſcarry in their greateſt concernments, and fall ſhort of eternal happineſs hereafter: And leſt we ſhould complain, as if we were, in this errable ſtate of life, left without ſufficient means to conduct us to the great end of all our Religion; And, in the glorifying of God, to ſave our ſouls; I ſhall now

ſhew ſome things before hinted, more plainly, and openly; That we are not left without ſufficient conduct from the Holy, and true, Spirit of God; But that he was in the World, at the firſt delivery of the Doctrines and Rules of life, expreſſed in the Writings of the New Teſtament, and ſtill continues to influence the minds and actions of men.

In order to the diſcharging this that I am now to engage in, I ſhall firſt prove, That the Holy Ghoſt did come according to the Predictions of the Prophets, and the Promiſe of our Saviour: For (1.) He came upon our Saviour himſelf. (2.) He inſpired and comforted his Apoſtles, and the firſt Planters of the Chriſtian Religion: And (3.) He ſtill influences the hearts and minds of thoſe that ſeek, and do not reſiſt, him.

Firſt, That this Holy Spirit reſted upon our Saviour, accompanying him throughout the actions of his life, none that pretends to the embracement of Chriſtianity can poſſibly contradict: For his Miracles atteſt this Divine reſidency, and loudly proclaim it to Ages and Generations: And, if there

there had not been this irrefragable teſtimony; yet, that there was ſuch a Divine impreſſion upon his mind; the purity of his Doctrine, and the holineſs of his life ſufficiently atteſted, and that the Divine Spirit inſpired and did aſſiſt him: As his Conception was by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo did it continually breath upon him through all the periods of his whole life: It gave a viſible atteſtation to his Perſon and Doctrine, and witneſſed his Commiſſion to the World, when at his Baptiſm it deſcended in the ſhape of a Dove, and lighted upon him, (*Matth.* 3. 16.): And this was ſeconded by an audible voice, loudly thundering from the very Skies, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* In his life he had the *Spirit without meaſure*, (*John* 3. 34.); He was not limited to the ſame proportions of power and aſſiſtance with S. *John*, who preached the Doctrine of Repentance, and by this prepared the way for the *Meſſiah*; Nor with thoſe Prophets of old, who were inſpired at ſundry times, and in diverſe manners; to whom divine and unaccountable impulſes were neither conſtant in their

method, or continuance; But the Holy Spirit accompanied our Saviour throughout the ſeveral ſtages of his life; ſo that he could upon any emergent occaſion, make diſcovery of it to others, and alwayes knew it to be reſident in himſelf; he carried it with him to his Cro's and Death to ſupport him in his miſery, and to cauſe him to triumph over his temptations, and enemies; It hovered, as it were, over his Grave, guarding his body with a ſecurity beyond the Souldiers power; and at laſt raiſed him with triumph from the dead, (*Rom.* 8.11.): and thus baffled the arguments for infidelity.

Secondly, This Spirit promiſed came alſo upon the Apoſtles of our Saviour. In the ſecond of the *Acts* at the beginning; It deſcended with noiſe, and a glorious ſplendor, and came with ſuch a train of ſolemnity, and its appearance was ſo gay and pompous, that it amuſed Nations, and confounded the multitude; It ſhook the great place of their aſſembly, and ſate glorioufly, in the ſhape of a Cloven Fiery Tongue, upon the head of each Apoſtle, giving them at once a character to diſtinguiſh them

them from others, and ability to execute that Commiſſion which our bleſſed Saviour had before given them; *They were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Here was the Prophecy of *Joel* accompliſhed, that God would *pour out his Spirit upon all fleſh*: when the Holy Ghoſt thus deſcended with power, in the lap of a Cloud, with a ruſhing wind, to blow open the doors of mens hearts, that the King of Glory might come in; It came with Cloven Fiery Tongues, to teach the Apoſtles to ſound forth the Goſpel to all the World with a becoming zeal, and warm affection: The Tongues were Cloven, that they might be ſure to divide the Word aright; and Glorious, like the ſtreams of Fire; not only to repreſent the Majeſty and Divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, or to ſignifie the clearneſs and perſpicuity of the Goſpel; but to enflame the zeal, and warm the devotion of theſe Apoſtles: Nay, they were both Fiery and Cloven, that their zeal might not be divorced from knowledge; but one might adminiſter to the other, and both to him who influenced them with

with this Spirit. This made them at once the admiration and envy of the World; This made their Doctrine glorious and triumphant, and confirmed it with Miracles, beyond the force of malice and contradiction: This cauſed the Church to ſpring from the Blood of Martyrs, made it live in the midſt of ſpight, and flouriſh on the tops of Croſſes and Gibbets; to ſhine glorioufly in the midſt of flames, and triumph over death it ſelf, though its members were killed all the day long. This gave the Apoſtles the previſion of thoſe things, which, in our Saviours life, they were not able to bear, at the ſame time giving them a proſpect of their miſery, and their comforts too: This brought to their remembrance what their Maſter had before taught them, and inſpired them to the inſtruction of others, that they might build the Chriſtian Church upon that Corner-Stone, which, though rejected of men, was in it ſelf elect, and precious.

Thirdly, The Holy Spirit came alſo, upon the hearts of believers. The *Samaritans that believed received the Holy Ghoſt*, (*Acts* 8. 17.); and *whilſt S. Peter*

S. Peter was preaching (occaſion'd by the converſion of *Cornelius*), *the Holy Ghoſt fell on thoſe that heard him*, (*Acts* 10.44.): And though, as to thoſe glorious effects of that power which at firſt was frequent in working Miracles, and inſpiring men to ſpeak divers languages for the proof and early propagation of the Goſpel, it now withdraws its force and operation; yet it ſtill continues that neceſſary influence, which impreſſes the minds of devout men, and aſſiſts them in the performance of their duty, and arms them with patience and reſolution: This Doctrine of the Spirits working upon the minds of men, is too frequently contradicted, even by ſuch as ſeem to want the aſſiſtance of ſome ſtrength ſuperiour to their own, whilſt to avoid one Rock, they run upon another: To eſcape that Enthuſiaſm which has too much diſturb'd the World, and led men into darkneſs and error, they reject the conduct of Gods Holy Spirit, when he would lead them into the way of truth. Men are ſo cautious leſt they ſhould infringe the uncontroulable liberty of their own wills, that they intrench upon the Divine Provi-

Providence, and endeavour to bind their God in chains, that he may sit fast in Heaven to very little purpose. If there were no such thing as a Divine influence and benediction from above, to what purpose would our prayers be? Why should we petition for those things which we are assured we shall never receive? Or how can any pray in faith, for what they believe will never come? We mock our Maker to his very face, when we say, *Turn thou us O good Lord, and so shall we be turned*; if God has no hand in the conversion of a sinner: and it would be prophane and ridiculous to pray for the being or increase of grace, if God did not influence our minds; Nay, he that rejects this principle, boldly pleads the cause of *Epicurus* against Christ, and the Philosophy of an Heathen countermands the Divinity of a Christian; For how can God rule the world, & exercise his Empire over the Powers of the Earth; how can he controll the purposes of men, and rebuke their actions, when they contradict the counsels of his Will, and the designs of his Providence, if he does not immediately influence their wills, as well

well as propoſe objects to their ſenſes? I know, we are too apt to diſbelieve thoſe things which we do not fully underſtand; and to expunge that out of our Creed, which is not plainly evident to our reaſon; But can it appear to be juſt and equal to reject a Being, becauſe we underſtand not the manner of its exiſtence? Or to deny ſuch effects as we ſee, becauſe we have not a view of the Cauſe, which is inviſible? If ſo, then farewel the ſublimeſt Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; And not only ſo, but the firſt Principle of all Religion, the Being of a God, which no mortal eye ever ſaw; nor can a finite Being frame a compleat Idea of him. Shall I deny the Creation of the World, becauſe I know not the manner of its Makers operation, when he ſent forth his *Fiat*; Nor how ſo rare a Syſteme of things, could be produced out of nothing pre-exiſtent? Muſt I reject Spirits becauſe I cannot ſee them, or all the operations of immaterial Beings upon the corporeal ſubſtances of this World, becauſe motion amongſt bodies, is made by contact, and I cannot apprehend how a Spirit can work upon a body, when

none

none but bodies can touch one another? Who can tell how our ſouls work upon our bodies? And yet none is ſo ſenceleſs as to deny it: Nay who can deſcribe the manner of our ſouls union to our bodies? And yet no man will refuſe to own the thing; or will any one deny the parts of bodies, to be united to each other, becauſe the term of their union was never yet ſo fully reſolved, as to baffle all objections to the contrary? Why ſhould we then doubt of the holy Spirits influencing the minds of men, becauſe the manner of operation is intricate and inexplicable? When we find it by the independence of our thoughts, and thoſe good ſuggeſtions crowded into the midſt of ſome evil contrivances, where no other reaſon can be given of them, but that they are injected from above, that we may fully convince our ſelves, by our own experience, that God works by his Spirit, and concurs with the motions of rational beings, when they incline to comply with his operations. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth* (ſayes our Saviour), *and thou hearеſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh,*

meth, and whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit, (John 3. 8.). We all believe that the wind blows, when it becomes obvious to our ſenſes; And yet the cauſes of theſe different winds, and the reaſon of this ſwift motion of the Air, have puzled the wiſeſt and moſt inquiſitive Philoſophers; God is, therefore, ſaid, by the Prophet, *to bring the winds out of his treaſures,* (Jer. 51. 16.); And, in the Book of *Job*, we find that they *break out of the chamber, and ſecret places*: So we diſcern the fruits and effects of the Spirit, though we cannot account for the manner of producing them: And, therefore, 'tis not unreaſonable to believe the influence of Gods Spirit upon the minds of men: For (1.) 'Tis poſſible. (2.) Neceſſary. (3.) From the Scripture infallibility, certain.

Firſt, The operation of the Holy Ghoſt upon the ſouls of men is poſſible. Our Saviour, to rebuke the wonder of his Diſciples at a Doctrine of his that ſeemed harſh and difficult, tells them, that *with God all things are poſſible*, (*Matth.* 19. 26.). The poſſibility therefore of a thing, prepares us for

for the belief of any propoſition, when either certainty or greater probabilities do not plainly determine the contrary: Now, what does not imply a contradiction that it ſhould be, is poſſible to be: But the Holy Spirits operation upon the minds of men does not imply any contradiction: And, therefore, it muſt be, at leaſt, a poſſible ſuppoſition that it may be ſo. Nay further, what has been, is, certainly, poſſible to be: But that there has been ſuch influences upon the minds of men, the ſacred Inſpirations of the Prophets, and Apoſtles, do abundantly evince; And to aſſert the contrary, muſt ſhake the very foundation of Religion, and invalidate the whole Canon of Scripture. And certainly, if it admits no contradiction, to affirm Spirits working upon Bodies; it muſt be leſs to ſuppoſe one Spirit to operate upon another; there being a nearer affinity betwixt their natures, and a greater capacity to apprehend the notices they receive from one another: For, if the Soul of one man may apprehend what are the thoughts of another, when they are expreſſed by the words of the tongue, or ſome external ſigns,

and

and repreſentations; There is as great a probability, that there may be more eaſie and quicker methods for one ſoul to converſe with another, were they freed from their bodies, than by the mediation of external ſenſes, which may, and often do, convey falſe repreſentations to the mind. And, therefore, for the holy Spirit of God to influence the minds and affections of men, is not only rendered poſſible; But a very probable, and eaſie, ſuppoſition: Though, whilſt we remain in theſe bodies, 'tis all one, as to the being of the thing, whether we conjecture, (for it can be no more) the influence to be made immediately upon the ſoul, or by percuſſions on, or diſpoſitions of, the nerves, and by determining the Spirits, ſo as to make repreſentations to the mind, to cauſe in it deſire, or averſation, and from hence juſt and proportionable actions, ſuitable to the deſign of the holy Spirit.

But (*Secondly*,) this influence and operation of the holy Spirit, is not only poſſible, but neceſſary too; if we conſider our own weakneſs and infirmity; or the circumſtances we are fre-

quently ſurrounded with in this vale of tears, and region of miſery ; We have ſtill a proneneſs and propenſity to ſin, notwithſtanding our being waſhed by an holy Baptiſm, and dipt in the ſacred Laver of regeneration: And, though grace were then conveyed to us, and power to perform our part of the Covenant which at laſt gives us the poſſeſſion of the promiſe ; Yet this cannot well be apprehended to be tied about us with ſuch indiſſoluble bonds, as not to forſake us upon the violation of our vow, when by ſinful courſes we reſcind Gods obligagation to us : Or, if there were no forfeiture to be made ; Yet we cannot apprehend this Grace and Spirit, given us at the firſt, to be ſo conſtantly and powerfully reſiding in us, as never to need any new ſupplies, or acceſſions of degrees ; Or to be like our ſouls, alwaies tied continually to invigorate us without any new influences from above : God governs the World by his Providence, and ſupports this great ſyſteme of Beings by the conſtant and continued influences of his Power impreſſing things, by his Divine concurrence, to accompliſh

pliſh the end and deſign of their beings, to continue their ſtated motions and order, and to repair their decayes, by a new and uninterrupted ſucceſſion; Now it would not be more falſe and unſuitable to his nature, to ſuppoſe him at firſt to have put things into their orderly motions, and to impregnate nature with all the power, at once, that ſhall at any time be requiſite for its ſupport and conduct, when things are ſubject to ſuch various miſadventures, that it is impoſſible for any but himſelf to foreſee; Than it would be to ſuppoſe him to give a child, in his ſacred Baptiſm, ſufficient ſtrength to influence his whole life, and afterwards leave him to his conflicts and misfortunes without any new aſſiſtances from above: This would, ſtill, make the Great and infinite Being of the World, inſtead of a wiſe and active God, nothing but an idle and lazy Spectator: We need not, then, pray for grace, and continued acceſſions of ſtrength and power; But only uſe thoſe words of *David*; *Caſt us not away from thy preſence, and take not thy holy Spirit from us*, (Pſal. 51. 11.). The Apoſtles and

Primitive Diſciples, of our Saviour were ſenſible of new acceſſions, or incomes from the Spirit, as the difficulties increaſed which they encountered: *For as the ſufferings of Chriſt abound in us* (ſayes S. *Paul*), *ſo our conſolation alſo aboundeth by Chriſt*, (2 Cor. 1. 5.). And when we ſhall conſider that our aſſiſtances are neceſſary in proportion to our duties, or our ſufferings, (all men being not in the ſame circumſtances, but ſome have an eaſier paſſage to an eternal reſt, and a bleſſed eternity, than others who are made a ſpectacle to the world; who have greater difficulties to encounter, a longer race to run upon the Earth, and are ſurrounded with a larger number of duties, and perplexities) certainly God, who is the God of all grace, will reaſonably give the influences of his Spirit ſuitable to the degrees of mens neceſſities, and the employments, or conflicts that his moſt wiſe Providence calls them unto: As the Apoſtles were not ſufficient of themſelves to preach the Chriſtian Doctrine to the World, and to obviate thoſe difficulties that attended the publication; ſo neither can any of us,

us, in our ordinary courſe of affairs in the World, being placed in the midſt of ſnares and temptations, keep conſciences void of offence, without the influences of Gods grace, and the aſſiſtances of his Spirit: S. *Paul* juſtifies himſelf to the *Corinthians*, by giving them a proſpect of his joy, and innocence: *Our rejoycing is this* (ſayes he), *the teſtimony of a good conſcience; that in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world, and more abundantly to you wards*, (2 Cor. 1. 12.). And when, in the third Chapter, he re-aſſumes the argument; leſt they ſhould think that all was effected by his own power; he introduces alſo this acknowledgement: *Not that we are ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing as of our ſelves; but our ſufficiency is of* God, ver. the 5*th*. God is not an hard and auſtere Maſter, *to reap where he did not ſow, nor to gather where he did not ſcatter*; He expects an account of his own talents, which every one does, or may, receive, in proportion to his wants and neceſſities, that he may grow up unto that meaſure of ſtature to which

Chriſt has appointed him in the world; And doubleſs we may obtain Divine helps; If men have but that love to themſelves, as to pray with fervency and devotion for them: *For, if ye, being evil,* (ſayes our Saviour), *know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (Luke 11. 13.). And ſince God is ſo bountiful to us, let us not be wanting to our ſelves: For, when we ſhall, with retirement, conſider, how numerous and potent our ſins are, which muſt all, in their habits be mortified, and ſubdued; how many turbulent or inticing temptations we have to oppoſe, that are ready every day to conquer us, and ſteal, inviſibly, to our moſt ſecret entertainments; how many paſſions we have to calm, and moderate, which, upon every ſuitable, and tempting, occaſion endeavour to make an inſurrection againſt our reaſon; How many perſonal, and relative, duties we are to perform in a wiſe and pious ordering our converſation; how the ſuggeſtions of our own fleſh, the injections of Sathan, and the malice and de-

deſilements of the world will endeavour to oppoſe, and obſtruct, our progreſs: When we conſider the black paſſage of death, and the grave, (and God knows what diſmal encounters we may meet with in our way to them); What fears will then ſuddenly ariſe to baffle our hopes, and make our faith ready to expire; And upon the whole, when we reflect upon our own weakneſs, and miſerable infirmity; In a word; When we conſider how much work we have to do, how little time to perform it, and what great diſproportion there is betwixt our duty and our power; It will not only appear, that it is high time to awake out of ſleep; to riſe and be doing: But to take the Armour of God for our defence, and to pray to Heaven for the aſſiſtance of the Spirit; Since this appears to be ſo neceſſary in relation to our weakneſs, and our duty: And, certainly, what is ſo neceſſary for our ſafe conduct to that Haven where we would be, and which God deſigns for our eternal reſt and ſhelter, from all tempeſts and future ſtorms; There is no reaſon why we ſhould diſtruſt the Spirits influence

and operation; Nor to make our ſelves uncapable of the favour, by teſtifying our unwillingneſs to receive it, by perpetually oppoſing, and diſputing againſt it.

For (*Laſtly,*) this influence of the holy Spirit upon the minds of holy and good men is, from the Scripture, infallibly certain to thoſe that, at once, both want, and beg, it, and do prepare themſelves for the reception of it: Why, otherwiſe, ſhould our Saviour give this aſſurance to his Diſciples, *that God gives the holy Spirit to thoſe that ask him?* Nay, what becomes of thoſe promiſes in the Scripture that engage Gods truth and faithfulneſs, to aſſiſt good men in the diſcharge of their duty, and to ſupport them under all their miſery and misfortune, if we were altogether left to our ſelves, to purſue the dictates of our own reaſon, and to ſtand only upon our own leggs without any ſuperiour help or influence? The Apoſtle tells us, *that the Spirit does help our infirmities*, (Rom. 8. 26.): But this would be falſe, if we had, either, none that required his aſſiſtance; Or that he would not condeſcend to ſupply our

our wants. S. *John* makes this *vinculum unionis*; this bond of union, betwixt Chriſt and us, the Spirit of God to be a character by which we may diſtinguiſh our ſelves; *Becauſe he has given us of his Spirit*, (1 John 4. 13.). And S. *Paul* fully agrees with S. *John*: *For* (ſayes he) *if any man has not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*, (Rom. 8. 9.). I know with what great induſtry theſe and other Texts have been reſtrained to that Divine temper of mind, by which we know, and diſcern, our condition; This indeed, being the gracious effect of the holy Spirits co-opperating with our endeavours, is by no means to be ſeparated in our judgment upon our ſelves; And we have no other way to judge of the cauſe, but by this Divine and glorious effect: But yet, where this is viſible in an holy life, and virtuous actions, we have no reaſon to exclude the cauſe; Eſpecially when it is principally included in the expreſſion; For the Apoſtle ſuppoſes this Spirit, that Chriſtians have, to be *the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead*; Nay a branch, alſo, of that power which ſhall hereafter raiſe us too:

For,

For, it follows; *He that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in us.* Becauſe our Bodies are here the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt; God will not ſuffer them to remain eternally in their ruiues; But will, hereafter, re-edifie, and raiſe, them, becauſe they were once the habitation of his Spirit. Hence are Believers ſaid to be *ſealed with the holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of their inheritance*, (Epheſ. 1. 13.). And, therefore, they are adviſed, in the ſame Epiſtle, *not to grieve this holy Spirit of God, whereby they are ſealed unto the day of their redemption*, (Eph. 4. 30.). Now, though we may be ſaid to be ſealed up for Heaven, by a Divine temper of mind upon Earth; that this prepares us for future glory, and that, if this diſpoſition be not in us, we are none of Chriſts: Yet it would be as harſh a ſpeech as can be admitted in any language, to ſay that this holy temper of mind ſhall raiſe us up at the laſt day; Since the wicked are then raiſed too: Or to ſay, that any man voluntarily grieves this Divine temper and diſpoſition of mind, when the

the man then grieves himſelf. Theſe expreſſions therefore muſt, certainly, intend more than this; And they can ſcarcely admit of a fair interpretation, without expounding them of the holy Spirit of God, which, now co-operating with our faculties, produces in us divine tempers and diſpoſitions, and ſo prepares us for that inheritance which he ſhall raiſe us up from our graves to poſſeſs. The Holy Ghoſt was firſt promiſed to the Apoſtles and Chriſtian Diſciples, under the names and notion of a *Comforter, and the Spirit of truth*; and how could he be both, or either, if he did not influence their minds with joy and knowledge? *The Spirit it ſelf* (ſayes the Apoſtle) *bears witneſs with our Spirits, that we are the children of God,* (Rom. 8. 16.). It did not only teſtifie unto others by thoſe Miracles that did confirm their Religion, and conſequently proved thoſe that did ſincerely embrace it to be born of God, as well as their Religion; But it evidenced theſe things alſo, to their own conſciences, by a ſacred benediction, and a Divine, and more immediate concurrence with them, when they compared their lives

lives with the Rules of their Religion; And, conſequently proves to them, *that they were heirs of God, and co-heirs with Chriſt*; which is the argument the Apoſtle is there proſecuting, to give them comfort in the midſt of tribulation, and to animate their courage, and reſolution, againſt the ſufferings of that preſent time. The graces and virtues viſible in a Chriſtians life are ſaid, in Scripture, to be *the fruits of the Spirit*, (Gal. 5. 22.). Not only that they are the fruits of the Goſpel, which is, ſometimes, phraſed by the word *Spirit*, in oppoſition to thoſe legal obſervations which, being carnal ordinances, are called *fleſh*: But, they are ſo the fruits of the Spirit, that, as he firſt dictated the Rule, ſo, does he alſo concurr to the actions. If the Evil Spirit could carry Chriſt to be tempted in the Wilderneſs; Shall we not think the good Spirit could relieve him too! *If the Prince of the power of the Air, can be a Spirit working in the children of diſobedience*, (Epheſ. 2. 2.); Shall we conclude the Holy Ghoſt leſs active, or powerful, to work in thoſe who reſign their wills, by the direction of his Laws,

Laws, to his moſt ſacred and ſafe conduct? The promiſe of life and eternal ſalvation is made to us upon this condition, *that through the Spirit we mortifie the deeds of the body*, (Rom. 8. 13.): And though many things concur with the influences of the holy Spirit to effect ſo great and victorious triumphs; Yet all cauſes act with a dependence upon this glorious power which works in us both to will and to do, when we prepare our ſelves for its reception, by endeavouring, what in us layes, *to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*, (Philip. 2. 12, 13.). Preaching, Prayers, Meditation, and hearing the word of God, are ordinary means to convert a ſinner from the error of his way; And yet S. *Paul* (though he ſufficiently magnifies the Preachers Office) ſayes, *that we are only workers together with God*, (2 Cor. 6. 1.). And, 'tis well for us all, when God aſſiſts, and bleſſes, our endeavours: And, God grant that thoſe who attend ſuch ſacred inſtitutions, being ſwift to hear, may never be ſo ſwift alſo as to depart without a bleſſing.

Having

Having thus both aſſerted and explained the coming of the holy Spirit to influence men, the certainty of its operation, and the neceſſity of its influence, which makes up this Chapter of my diſcourſe; I ſhall cloſe it with a brief requeſt to all who deſire ſo to approve themſelves to God here, that they may not be rejected by him hereafter; That they would uſe all poſſible diligence to obtain, and keep, the bleſſing, and influence of this holy Spirit, which gives them ſuch great aſſiſtance in ſanctifying their minds, and ordering all the actions of their lives: That they would well uſe the grace they have received, that ſo they may be capable of more in the hour of trial, and at the day of temptation: That they would pray frequently for new ſupplies of aid and aſſiſtance; And that they would never by a vicious and unholy life, grieve the *Spirit*, and cauſe it to deſert them, leſt through too much confidence in themſelves, they at laſt prove both Cowards and Apoſtates.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

HAving in the former Chapter, in ſome meaſure, proved that the Holy Spirit of God deſcended, according to the predictions of the Prophets, and the promiſe of our Saviour; I ſhall now enquire into his work and buſineſs in this world, amongſt men who were rational and intellectual Beings; Who might (as ſome men are apt to think) have, well enough, propagated Chriſtian Doctrine, when they had heard it from our Saviours own mouth; and had, for ſome time, daily converſation with him; Without any other new aſſiſtance, beſides the miraculous gift of tongues. And what employment the Spirit of God could poſſibly have among other men; As they will not be Religious enough to know; So, truly, they are yet, very much to ſeek. However I ſhall adventure (without calling any men names) to ſhew, according to my

my ſteady, and long continued (though mean) thoughts, what the ſacred Spirit of God has done, and yet does, to guide men into the wayes of truth. In the promiſes where Chriſt (who was truth it ſelf) engages for the Spirits coming into the World in a more plentiful manner than in foregoing periods; He ſeems to be deſcribed as a perſon different from the Father and the Son: And I ſhall inſtance in one eminent promiſe to this purpoſe, (*John* 16. 13.): *Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* Now that our great, and moſt bleſſed, Redeemer of men ſpeaks of a perſon here; And not of what is ſaid to be an *afflatus divinus* only, (as ſome have interpreted this place, to void the Doctrine of the moſt glorious Trinity; Which is the great, and, I had almoſt ſaid, the diſtinguiſhing Article of the Chriſtian Faith) is plain from the terms of this Text; Becauſe ἐκεῖνος is prefix'd to τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας; *He, the Spirit of truth*; And this latter part, (which is a Periphraſis) does but acquaint us who the Perſon was; Even the Holy Ghoſt, the third Perſon in the moſt Glo-

Glorious Trinity, God bleſſed for evermore. Now this profound myſtery of the Trinity, however inexplicable it may ſeem to be, in all particulars, to the underſtandings of men, who are loth to think that any Beings are above their great capacities and reaſonings: Yet it has been alwayes believ'd by the Orthodox, through all the Ages of the Chriſtian Church; And it is a point ſufficient (if there were no other) to baffle the Heathen Objection againſt our Religion, *viz.* That it cannot be Divine, becauſe there is no Myſtery in it. But I deſign not to treat, in this diſcourſe, with any that own not Chriſt to be the *Meſſiah*; The great King and Saviour of the World: And therefore ſhall only acquaint the Reader; That Jeſus himſelf ſeems to take great care to inſinuate, and fix, this fundamental point in the particular promiſes of the Holy Ghoſt; Leſt any perſons, mighty in reaſon, and wonderful in argument, ſhould refuſe to believe ſuch a Myſtery as this, when apparently revealed, becauſe their own reaſon is not able to conclude the thing, or their language cannot fully

explain it. In the fourteenth of Saint *Johns* Goſpel, the ſixteenth Verſe, our bleſſed Saviour acquaints his Diſciples, for their comfort and encouragement, with this great promiſe; *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth.* Here is one praying; another ſending; and a third given. So is it alſo at the twenty ſixth Verſe of the ſame Chapter; *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Here is the Father ſending, in the Sons name, or (upon his account) the Holy Ghoſt, to teach the Apoſtles thoſe things which our Saviour had more briefly hinted to them; And ſuch things alſo which the Apoſtles, through prejudice, could not then receive: And, to bring thoſe parts of the Chriſtian Doctrine to their remembrance, which they, through human frailty, might forget: That ſo they might be fitted to be the publiſhers, and the ſacred and infallible Pen-men of the moſt excellent Principles

ciples of the Chriſtian Religion; And that it might, by their means, be, in its purity, free from mixture, delivered to all the ſucceeding generations of mankind. And now (by the way), what a ſlender plea have any Enthuſiaſts, of this age, for any new revelations of Doctrine beyond what Chriſt preached to the World? Since the Holy Ghoſt himſelf was never promiſed to the very Apoſtles, to any ſuch end and purpoſe. For, it cannot, with any reaſon, be ſuppoſed, but that Chriſt whilſt he was preaching in the world, delivered a compleat Body of his Doctrine: And had he not; (whatever becomes of a *jus divinum*, for the government of the Church) He had, certainly, been leſs careful than *Moſes*. And, yet, the Author to the *Hebrews* ſays; *He was faithful to him that made, or appointed him; as, alſo, Moſes was faithful in all his houſe*, (Heb. 3. 2.). But, not to endeavour to work Miracles, and reſtore ſight to ſuch as are reſolved to be ſtill blind, and to ſhut their eyes againſt the light of the Sun; becauſe it will diſcover that their deeds are evil, when darkneſs does at once as

well increaſe, as inſpire, wilfulneſs or melancholy: To leave, alſo, any farther explication of the Doctrine of the Trinity; Which I have hinted to you, as well to mind you of the ſolemnity of a neceſſary Feſtival of our Church, as to cauſe men to adore what they cannot underſtand; to admire that with which they cannot be familiar; to praiſe what they cannot comprehend; and to believe that Myſtery which is plainly revealed; Though they cannot unriddle the thing it ſelf: To come more cloſely therefore to the buſineſs I have in hand; The Holy Ghoſt promiſed, is ſaid to be *the Spirit of truth*: And this not only, (1.) Becauſe he is *Spiritus verax* (as *Slichtingius* would have it, to comport with his endeared notion of *afflatus divinus*); Nor, only, is he a true Spirit, either in original, or operation; in oppoſition to what is groſs, and ſenſual: Nor (2.) becauſe he truly and really proceeds from the Father; And conſequently has Authority enough to produce a faith in us, which muſt be Divine: Nor (3.) becauſe, being in unity with that *Father and Son, from whom he does proceed, he*

he muſt be truth it ſelf, (as S. *John* ſtiles him: 1. *Epiſt.* 5. *Chap.* 6.); and, conſequently, cannot be guilty of a falſhood, unleſs we ſuppoſe that God may lie; which the Apoſtle aſſures us is impoſſible, (*Heb.* 6. 18.): And reaſon alſo concludes ſuch a Being to be void of this, to whom we aſcribe all poſſible perfection. But (*Laſtly,*) he is called a *Spirit of truth*, in relation to his Office and Employment; Becauſe he guides others into truth; Though from the precedent acceptations, and account given, of his appellation, we may reaſonably infer his capacity to inſtruct, and guide, others into all truth: And that the Apoſtles, who were ſo miraculouſly guided, delivered nothing to be the rule of mens lives, but what was true and came from God, and therefore what they delivered, is to be both believed, and obeyed. And thus I am come to the laſt and principal particular, that I aim at in this Part of my Diſcourſe, in which is contained the Office of the Holy Ghoſt in this particular, and the ſubſtance of this promiſe; *viz.* *He will guide you into all truth.*

Now this Conduct of the *Spirit of truth*, muſt be conſidered two wayes, (1.) As it related to the Apoſtles, and firſt Diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour. (2.) As it concerns the whole Church of Chriſt, that is, or ſhall be, Militant in this World.

Firſt, Let us conſider the *holy Spirit of God*, as influencing and directing the Apoſtles, and firſt planters of Chriſtianity, to whom this promiſe was principally made; And, as it did concern all, ſo was it promiſed to all, to guide them into all thoſe truths that compleated the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, or were to be left as ſtanding directions for the lives and actions of thoſe, who ſhould embrace this Religion. He does not call S. *Peter* out, and make this promiſe of infallibility to him, excluding all the reſt from this advantage: Nor does he here accoſt him in the name of the other Apoſtles; as he does in that other Text, on which the Pope ſuperſtructs his Supremacy: We find, indeed, S. *Thomas*, S. *Philip*, and S. *Jude* interrupting his diſcourſe, by propoſing queſtions for him to explain: But, the laſt time he ſpake to *Peter*, we find him at once

once rebuking his confidence, and fore-telling his ſin; Nay, a crime ſo great, as *to deny him*, (John 13. 38.). And, therefore, all the reſt of his intervenient diſcourſe, can concern him no more than it did his Brethren: And 'tis well if, at preſent, it did as much; which, if others would be contented with, we might eaſily grant it, and muſt do ſo, if we would not prove his Epiſtles to want an inſpiration from above. This promiſe then, concerning the Apoſtles and primitive planters of the Chriſtian Doctrine, ſo far as it was uſeful to their extraordinary conduct, we muſt examine, and enquire what aſſiſtance the Spirit gave them, *to guide them into all truth.* And this he did in five particulars.

Firſt, By an improvement of their underſtandings; Ordering, and directing, the Ideas of their minds, that they might be able to frame adequate conceptions of the truths, which they were to deliver to the World; And *as he that created the eye, can ſee, and he that formed the ear, can hear*: So he that made the Soul it ſelf, and endued it with all its faculties, and

powers, muſt needs be able to impreſs the underſtanding with any notions he is pleaſed to infuſe by the powerful operations of his Holy Spirit. Now that he did exert ſuch an influence, had we no teſtimony from the Scriptures themſelves, will eaſily appear to any ſober and conſiderate inquirer, that ſhall compare the education, and condition, of the Apoſtles with thoſe admirable Doctrines, which they delivered unto the world. Though S. *Paul* was bred at the feet of *Gamaliel*, yet his learned Education made him but the greater perſecutor of the Chriſtians, and more prejudiced againſt the Doctrine of our Saviour; 'Till he was converted by a Miracle, and a light had firſt dazled his eyes, and ſtruck him blind, whilſt a greater did illuminate his underſtanding, and, by its brighter glory, darken and blot out thoſe prejudicate notions that ſeemed before to irradiate his mind: Though S. *Luke* was born and bred in an Univerſity, the City of *Antioch*, the Metropolis of *Syria*, a place furniſhed with Schools of literature; Though he had applied himſelf to the ſtudy of Phyſick, to which Philoſophy

ſophy was a neceſſary preparative; Though he had ſtudied in the Schools of *Greece*, and *Egypt*, and ſeaſoned his mind with learned accompliſhments, ſo far improving the abilities of his nature; And, though, to all this, he was a *Jewiſh* Proſelyte, and ſo far prepared for the Kingdom of God; Yet all this ſignified but little, and would certainly have oppoſed Chriſtianity with the greater ſtrength, and more ſubtilty, had he not been firſt converted to this Religion, and accompanied Saint *Paul*; received the notices of thoſe early, and firſt, tranſactions of our Saviour, and his Diſciples, and been guided by the Holy Spirit of God, in recording the Hiſtory and Doctrine of our Saviour, and his Apoſtles. But, if we make the ſtricteſt enquiry into thoſe twelve Apoſtles, which our Saviour ſent to preach his Doctrine abroad in the World, we ſhall find them all by their Education, either too much prejudiced, or unprepared, to invent, or propagate, ſuch a Religion: The greater part were a few rugged and inconſiderable Fiſhermen, that knew only to catch Fiſh, and mend their Nets when they were broken,

broken, and either eat, or ſell their Fiſh when they had caught it. And how unfit theſe were to preach rules of life to the world, to make known Riddles, and explain Myſteries; To maintain their Faith againſt the learned diſputes of *Rabbies*, and Philoſophers, or to commit a Syſtem of Chriſtian Doctrine to writing for future ages to live by, and that it might become the rule for mens actions; Let any reaſonable men judge. It muſt needs, therefore, be a greater argument of a larger inſpiration, that theſe men were ſo ſlenderly prepared by nature or Education: And, by how much the meaner theſe were, by ſo much the more powerful were the operations of the Spirit, *to guide them into all truth.* But, beſides the conſideration of this, we have a more ſure word of Prophecy, to aſcertain their inſpiration from above; *Since all Scripture is given by inſpiration of God*; (2 Tim. 3. 16.). And, ſince no man can poſſibly know thoſe Laws by which God will govern the World, 'till he pleaſes himſelf to make them known; It muſt needs be, that he muſt impregnate the minds, and inform

form the underſtandings, of thoſe whom he deſigns to be the Pen-men of his Laws; And this he did, as to *Moſes* and the Prophets under the Old, ſo, to the Apoſtles in the New Teſtament, by his *Holy Spirit*: Therefore was he *to teach them all things*, by informing their underſtandings, (*John* 14. 26.). And, *by guiding them into all truth*, (John 16. 13.)

Secondly, The Holy Spirit of truth, guided the Apoſtles, and firſt publiſhers of his ſacred Doctrines, by quickning their memories; That what their Maſter had, before, taught them, the Diſciples, now, might remember for the benefit of others. The memories of men, by reaſon of their own weakneſs, and the multitude of objects which daily preſent themſelves to the mind, and that variety of converſe, and numerous diſturbances they meet with in a World, full of noiſe and humour, are very apt to ſlip many things which they ought to regiſter, and, when they are entered, to loſe the record. Hence is that admonition of the Author to the *Hebrews*; *that we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard*,

heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip; (Heb. 2. 1.). The Apoſtles, therefore, (who were men of like paſſions with our ſelves), had an extraordinary power aſſiſting their memories; That thoſe things might again recur, which they had heard from our Saviour, at that time when by his abſence he was uncapable of repeating, and orally to deliver that Doctrine which, before, they had the advantage of hearing: The Spirit, then, by an immediate impreſſion, put their Spirits into ſuch a motion, and propoſed ſuch objects to their conſideration and underſtanding, and ſo ranged the particles of the brain, that the ſame images preſented themſelves, and they had the ſame Ideas, and apprehenſions which poſſeſs'd their minds, when the truths were firſt delivered to them: Or, if I may be any way extravagant in endeavouring to deſcribe the manner of framing this miraculous effect; Yet ſure I am that ſome way or other, this was done, or the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt was not fully accompliſhed; *For* (ſayes the Text) *the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall teach you all things, and*

and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you, (John 14. 26.).

Thirdly, This Holy Spirit of Truth inclined the wills of the Apostles and first Planters of Christianity, to publish those things which were impress'd upon their understandings, and their memories now perfectly retained; and to commit these truths to Writing, that future Ages might be able to read, what they could neither see nor hear: To exhibit no more than what they had received for the Divine Rule; and to live, also, suitable to their Doctrine, to avoid the suspicion of Cheat and Imposture. Now, though this influence might seem to be unnecessary to such as had imbibed the Christian Doctrine with their understandings, because their wills might seem immediately to follow what their understandings dictated to be true; and the reasonableness, and admirable excellency of this Doctrine might be motive enough to perswade, as well to its practice, as belief: Yet we find, by a woful experience, that the wills of men do not alwayes follow the dictates of their understandings; But that we violate

violate Laws, which yet we are convinced to be true and good: If it were not ſo, few men would embrace vice, and offer injury to the Precepts of Chriſtianity; which all men, of reaſon and diſcretion, muſt needs acknowledge to be excellent in themſelves, and infallibly ſealed and authorized by God; who has by a miraculous hand, atteſted them to the World. It was neceſſary therefore, that the Apoſtles and firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel ſhould be made willing, as well as able, to accompliſh all thoſe things which might tend to the propagation and aſſurance of the Goſpel: And we cannot conjecture that ſo ſudden an alteration could be made, as we find in the Apoſtles, who, by their Trade and Education, were rough and ſtubborn, (this being generally obſerved of Mariners) ſo as to be brought to acknowledge ſuch gentle precepts ſo oppoſite to their cuſtoms, and inclination, without a ſuperiour influence mollifying their tempers, and the powerful operation and perſwaſions of God *to make them willing in the day of his power.* When *Paul* therefore was converted by a Miracle, and brought

brought to the acknowledgement of that *Jeſus* whom he had perſecuted; that glorious light which ſhined upon his underſtanding, rectified alſo the perverſeneſs of his will, and inclined that to follow his Conviction; ſo that he became not *diſobedient to the Heavenly Viſion, but ſhewed both to the Jews and Gentiles, that they ſhould repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*, (Acts 26. 19, 20.).

Fourthly, The Holy Ghoſt led the Apoſtles into all truths of the Goſpel, by working Miracles to confirm their Doctrine. Theſe are the great Seal of Heaven, that ſufficiently authorize whatever they are brought to give teſtimony unto: For theſe being either viſible effects beyond the power of natural Cauſes, or ſome ſtrange and extraordinary alterations of nature, by laying a reſtraint upon its uſual operations; Or cauſing it to take a different courſe by a ſtrange compoſition of ſecond Cauſes, or a powerful concurrence of ſome Agent not included in the immediate Cauſe; They argue ſome ſuperiour operation: And we muſt attribute them to God, or the De-

Devil. Accordingly have men uſed to difference them, as they tend to a good, or a bad, deſign: Hence we find in the Old Teſtament, two characters of a *falſe Prophet*, and conſequently as many of a *true*, as I have hinted immediately before. (1.) If the ſign, or wonder, that he gives for confirmation of what he pretends, in its deſign deſtroys natural Religion, *i. e.* what proceeds from the common reaſon of men. *For if there ariſe among you a Prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and the ſign or wonder come to paſs which he gives thee*; If this be wrought to draw men from the Worſhip of the only one God, to pay Divine homage to a falſe one, or to many; The ſign was permitted only to prove them; And ſuch a Prophet was not only to be accounted falſe; But to be put to death for his villany and impoſture, (*Deut.* 13. at the beginning). (2.) When the Prophecy was not true, and the thing foretold followed not, 'twas a ſign that the Prophecy was bold and preſumptuous, and what he, that is a God of truth, never commiſſioned the Prophet to deliver, (*Deut.* 18. 22.). When ſigns, therefore, and wonders, were

were really effected, that tended to the advancement of Religion; eſtabliſhing what was written in mens hearts, and deſtroying all that God had forbidden; and fixing nothing contradictory to what had been confirmed to the *Jews*, but what did prefigure this new method, and, at ſuch a particular period of the World was predicted that it ſhould be deſtroyed; They muſt needs confirm the truth which thoſe men delivered, who had ſufficient power and authority to work them. Miracles were things rationally acknowledged to be ſufficient ſigns of the Divine Commiſſion of thoſe who were permitted to work them; when they carried, eſpecially, ſuch characters of a Divine Power in their nature, or in their frequency, and continuation, as no Devil could be ſuppoſed to have granted to him; Nor any man could poſſibly effect to do miſchief in the World: Thus, when *Moſes* delivered the Law, his Speech was followed with Thunderings and Lightnings, and the noiſe of the Trumpet, and the ſmoaking of the Mountain (*Deut.* 20. 18.). Which ſufficiently confirmed the Divinity of the Moral, and prepared the

people for an obedient reception of the Judicial, and Ceremonial, Law. And thus was it alſo at the delivery of the Goſpel. When S. *John* the *Baptiſt* ſent two of his Diſciples unto Chriſt, to know whether he were the true *Meſſiah*, that was to give Laws unto the World; Our Saviour returns this anſwer; *Tell John what things ye have ſeen and heard; how that the blind ſee, the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed*, (Luke 7. 22.). Theſe Miracles, ſo full of goodneſs and Divine influence, were a ſufficient atteſtation of his Doctrine. Hence he makes the ſame reply, alſo, to the *Jews*, when they propoſed the ſame queſtion: *The works that I do in my Fathers name, they bear witneſs of me*, (John 10. 25.). And therefore ſayes he of the ſame perſons; *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had had no ſin; If I had not done Miracles far beyond Moſes and the Prophets, whom yet, upon the authority of what theſe did, they believe; they might reaſonably have pleaded their Law againſt me; Which, then, had been bleſs'd with as noble an eſtabliſhment, as what I now pretend to deliver:*

liver: But now that I do ſuch works which no man ever yet did before me; they have no cloke at all for their ſin, nor any excuſe for their unbelief, (John 15. 24.). Now, as Miracles argued the truth and Authority of our Saviours Doctrine: So they led his Diſciples into the ſame truth: For, from thoſe Miracles which they ſaw him do in confirmation of his Doctrine, they might reaſonably be induced to believe what he delivered to them; and when the power was yet continued to themſelves, they might well inferr that they were ſtill guided into the truth: Since the Holy Ghoſt thus ſealed it to themſelves and others; and they had ſo powerful, and Divine, a teſtimony to what they apprehended, and delivered. Thus when they had received that Commiſſion from our Saviour, *to go into the world, and to preach the Goſpel to every creature; They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with ſigns following,* (Mark 16. 20.). The ſame is atteſted by the Authour to the *Hebrews, that God bare the Apoſtles witneſs, with ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles,*

and diſtributions of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his will, (Heb. 2. 4.). This is the teſtimony he gave unto the truth, by the Miracles which were wrought by thoſe who publiſhed and owned the Doctrine of our Saviour, evidenceing its Divinity to themſelves, and others: *For we* (ſay the Apoſtles) *are witneſſes of theſe things, and ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them that obey him,* (Acts 5. 32.).

Laſtly, The Holy Spirit guided the Apoſtles and Primitive Diſciples into all truths of the Goſpel, by an extraordinary ſupport in the midſt of great, and raging, perſecutions. Both Scripture, and Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, informs us, what trials and conflicts theſe had for the profeſſion of their Faith, and a firm adheſion to the Chriſtian Religion. Their whole lives were a continued tragedy, which did not end, but in blood, and death: The ſtate of the Church was ſuch in thoſe dayes, that All *that would live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, muſt ſuffer perſecution,* (2 Tim. 3. 12.). Nothing but cruelties from their ſevere Adverſaries, attended the profeſſion and publicati-

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on of the Gospel; Which was the principal foundation of that Argument, of S. *Paul*, to prove the hopes and certainty of the Resurrection, *If, in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*, (1 Cor. 15. 19.). Hence the Apostle argues the *Hebrews* to patience and courage in the midst of sufferings, from the reflections upon what they had already overcome; That they might not, by a future cowardize, lose the reward of their former adventures. *Call to mind* (sayes he) *the former dayes, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions:* By having their Estates made a prey to their enemies; by being made a gazing stock to the world; by bearing reproaches and tortures themselves, and being companions to those, who were so used, (*Heb.* 10. 32.). *They gat their bread with the peril of their lives*; As the expression is (*Lament.* 5.9.); *And, for the sake of Christ they were killed all the day long, and no more accounted of than as innocent sheep appointed to the slaughter*; As S. *Paul* applies that of the Psalmist, (*Rom.* 8. 36.). And, if we view the ends of their lives, we shall find na-

ture alwayes anticipated, and they ſnatched away by a violent fate, ſtill ſwimming to Heaven in their blood. One is crucified, another beheaded, a third is ſtoned, a fourth has his brains beat out with a Club; Another is hanged by the neck againſt a Pillar, after whips and ſcourges had made a Prologue to the Tragedy; One is flead alive, another thruſt through with a Spear; and a third dragg'd about the craggy part of a ſtreet, till his fleſh was torn off, and horrid pains compell'd him to expire. It would be endleſs to account for the diſmal tortures which the Apoſtles, and Primitive Diſciples endured, their whole age being full of clouds and ſtorms; And the releaſe from one torment, was but the entrance upon another: They daily went in danger of their lives, which, were, indeed, but continued deaths, and repeated tragedies; Now, what a wonderful confirmation muſt this add to their own faith, as well as ſeal its truth to poſterity, that they ſhould have ſuch multiplied tortures, as anxious and cruel, as the malice of enraged Adverſaries could invent and execute; and yet

yet would not accept deliverance, if they muſt purchaſe it with the denial of their Faith; They muſt needs be animated to the belief of thoſe truths, in the profeſſion of which they were ſo encouraged, by a Divine power, and the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, that they ſuffered torments beyond their own ſtrength to endure; Nor did the rage and perſecution of their Adverſaries overcome them; Eſpecially when we ſhall conſider too, that they could ſmile in the midſt of flames, and look upon their own blood with joy; When they could account Martyrdom a Crown, and ſuch deaths as were moſt painful and cruel, they could travel through, as the neareſt paſſage to their eternal reward: Which, whilſt they viewed in a ſteady and well fixed contemplation, they were able to conclude their afflictions to be light, and to endure but for a moment; And that the future reward overballanced them both in weight and duration. They could glory in what the juſtice and cuſtome of the world accounted ſhame; *and rejoice that they were deemed worthy to ſuffer for it* (Acts 5. 41.). They were

alwayes dying, and yet lived; were able to account tortures chaſtiſements, and could ſtill rejoyce in the midſt of ſorrows, (2 *Cor.*6.): *They could approve themſelves the Miniſters of God in patience, in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments*; and that black Catalogue which S. *Paul* has recorded to poſterity; It muſt certainly convince both themſelves and others, that the hand of God did yet ſupport them, and that the Doctrine was true which they delivered, for which they were miraculouſly prepared, and now ſtrengthened in their ſufferings for it, by the comforts and aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt. They knew themſelves to be a company of rude and illiterate men, (or at leaſt ſome of them were) not poliſhed either by art or Education, for converſe with the learned *Rabbies* amongſt the *Jews*, or the ſubtil Philoſophers amongſt the *Gentiles*; and yet they baffled, and could ſilence both, had not their force reached farther than their argument. And therefore (ſayes S. *Paul*) *where is the wiſe? where is the Scribe? where is the diſputer of this world? Hath not God made*

fooliſh

fooliſh the wiſdom of this world? (1 Cor. 1. 20.). S. *Stephen*; who was but a Deacon to the Apoſtles, was yet ſo full of faith, and ſo endowed with the power of the Holy Ghoſt, that he did not only amaze the people with the greatneſs of his Miracles; but when many diſputants were rang'd againſt him, he did not only ſmartly encounter, but overcame them too; *For they were not able to reſiſt the wiſdom and the Spirit by which he ſpake,* (Acts 6. 10.). They were fain to leave their reaſoning, and conſult their ſubtilty; and had no way to ſtop his mouth, but by a ſhower of ſtones, that took away his breath; What could ſuch men as theſe have done, when they were brought before the Council of the *Jews*, or Tribunals of the *Romans?* Where all the ſubtle quirks of Law, and all the inventions that malice could contrive, ſhould be uſed to entangle their innocence by craft; had not the Holy Ghoſt aſſiſted them in making their defence, looſened their tongues, and informed their underſtandings. This was what was promiſed them before, and now as certainly

tainly and fully accomplished; For when our Saviour sent forth his twelve Apostles, and told them how they should acquiter themselves; what were the contents of their Commission; and how they should demean themselves: He acquaints them also what dangers they were likely to encounter with; They were sent forth as *Sheep* in the midst of *Wolves*; Every one would endeavour to devour them; *And therefore they should be scourged in the Synagogues; and be brought before Kings and Governours*, upon their Masters account. *But* (sayes he), *When they shall deliver you up, let it not trouble you*, that ye are not well skill'd in the Law, where subtilty may cause a Criminal to escape, when ignorance may draw the innocent into punishment: *For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you*, (Matth. 10. 19.). Now men that had such extraordinary confirmations of their Apostleship, and found these assistances from the Holy Ghost, must needs be fully convinced of those things that were imprinted on their under-

understandings, and would attest their Divine authority unto others, to whom they were obliged to declare and publish them, when they themselves were so fully perswaded, as not only to suffer all the inconveniencies of this life, that could be brought upon them by the subtilty of the Politicians of the World, but all the tortures and cruel deaths, which malice was able to inflict. And thus did the Holy Spirit of truth, guide the Apostles *into all truth.*

But yet (notwithstanding all this) it must be considered that though the Apostles and primitive Disciples of our Saviour, had thus the conduct of the holy Spirit; Yet it was never intended to guide them into all truths of all kinds; For this were to extend a promise beyond what was ever designed by the Holy Ghost. Truth is a word of a large interpretation; it runs through all Arts and Sciences, and is as comprehensive as all the objects and understandings of men: For, whereever there is a conformity betwixt the object and a rightly prepared intellect, there is truth: Nay, there is too often truth in that which we

do

do not underſtand. The Spirit therefore did not deſign, in his ſacred and infallible conduct, to extend the capacities of the ſacred Apoſtles, to an infinite comprehenſion, ſo as to cauſe them to know *omne ſcibile*; every thing that is capable to be known: For that were not only to make a new creation, but to put them beyond the capacity of Creatures; Nay, though he is Omnipotent, to go beyond his own power, in making Beings as infinite as Himſelf. Nor did the Spirit in the guidance of the Apoſtles *into all truth*, intend their information, in the truths of all the Arts and Sciences extant in the World: He did not deſign to inſtruct them in the art of *Syllogiſm*; Nor that they ſhould read natural Philoſophy to the World; He did not intend to teach them to call the *Stars* by their names; or that they ſhould, by virtue of his inſtruction, know their ſeveral motions, diſtances, or altitudes: He did not intend Aphoriſms in Phyſick; Or to give to them Geometrical proportions; Nor to breed them curious and expert Artificers, though ſome of theſe have made themſelves Apoſtles; Nor to teach them the numbers

bers of Arithmetick; Or the Aſtrological ſignatures of things, or times and ſeaſons; For, theſe were not for them to *know*; *becauſe the Father had put them into his own power*, (Acts 1. 7.). And therefore, as they were never ſo proud and bold, ſo neither were they ſo unlucky, as the Pope, who muſt needs condemn a point in Geography, and the tenet of *Antipodes*, for a deſtroying Hereſie: So little did he know the univerſal Empire he pretended to, that he did not underſtand the extent of it, nor the Figure or Bounds, or Inhabitants of that Earth over which he yet pretended an Authority. The Holy Ghoſt, therefore, guided the Apoſtles into thoſe truths only, in Divinity, which included the full Doctrine of the Goſpel; which our Saviour delivered, that they might be able to preach them to the preſent age, and commit them to writing for the uſe of all ſucceeding Generations. The Spirit was not given to them to make them great Hiſtorians, or Philoſophers; but Chriſtians; and to capacitate them, to be the planters and founders of Churches, not the poſts and ſtandards of diſpute; Or to be the leaders

leaders of Sects and Factions in Philosophy: They were to erect a Pillar of truth setled upon a firm foundation, Christ himself supporting the Building, and this neither for Pasquins or Poetry, but for a Rule and directory of standing Religion and Devotion.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE ſouls of men whilſt hous'd in theſe bodies of clay, are darkned and obſcured, notwithſtanding all the windows of ſenſe, to let in the light of external objects to an intercourſe with the mind: For ſuppoſing our ſenſes could alwayes make true and exact repreſentations to our ſouls, which yet we know are often deceived; yet theſe could only convey ſuch things as are the proper objects of the ſouls of men: Thoſe of an higher, and more exalted, nature, that are not capable of an image, muſt needs eſcape the perception of our outward ſenſes; and, if reaſon it ſelf, when moſt diſentangled from thoſe fetters which our ſenſes too often impoſe, ſhould endeavour to make propoſitions and inferences about the eſſences of thoſe things, whoſe ſpiritual natures evade our ſenſe, our notions could not be adequate to the things themſelves, nor could

could we fully comprehend what is infinite, nor have a poſitive Idea of ſpiritual Beings, though reaſon might conclude their exiſtence. Hence is it that all our definitions and deſcriptions of theſe are therefore imperfect, becauſe negative; and, though we may conclude what they are not, we never could, by humane power, yet reſolve compleatly what they are; which makes Divine Revelation neceſſary, and that we ſhould have faith beyond our reaſon, though we never believe without reaſon, to aſſure us of the authority we confide in: This being, therefore, our ſtate and condition in this World, we muſt as well praiſe Gods Goodneſs, as admire his Power for ſending us that Spirit of Truth which guides us into all truth, that is neceſſary to conduct us to eternal happineſs. Now this Promiſe I told you, I would conſider two wayes, (1.) As it related to the Apoſtles, and firſt Diſciples of our Lord and Saviour. (2.) As it concerns the whole Church of Chriſt, that is, or ſhall be militant on the earth. The firſt of theſe is already diſpatched. And therefore I now proceed to the ſecond, To view the

the Promiſe of the Spirits guidance, as it concerns the Church throughout the ſeveral Ages, and Periods, of the Chriſtian World. I have already proved the divine influence on the minds of men, (though its immediate operation is too difficult to be explained, as to the manner of its energy and work), and that we have no reaſon to disbelieve the thing, for that we know not the manner of its operation: What, therefore, is now to be diſcourſed (ſuppoſing the truth of its influence in general, and that extraordinary aſſiſtance he gave unto the Apoſtles) is; How the Holy Spirit of God poſſeſſes the minds of thoſe with truth, who make themſelves, by holy diſpoſitions, and a due exerciſe of their rational faculties, capable to receive it; and what truths thoſe are that the Spirit of God guides men into?

As to the firſt; ſuppoſing that which has been already proved; That the Apoſtles were inſpired from above to receive a full revelation of thoſe truths, (by opening their underſtandings and quickning their memories) that concern the ſalvation of mankind, and that they committed them to wri-

ting, faithfully recording them for the uſe of poſterity; and that theſe are to be ſtanding rules for all ages and generations to come: I cannot find any other method the Spirit has uſed, or does continue, to guide the ages ſucceeding the Apoſtles into all truth; but what is contained in theſe three particulars. (1.) By thoſe Scriptures which he inſpired the Apoſtles to publiſh and deliver. (2.) By inclining the hearts of ſome men to continue that Miniſtry, which muſt endure to the end of the world. And (3.) By confirming thoſe truths contained in the Scriptures, unto the minds of men, by co-operating with the external miniſtration, by an internal work upon the underſtanding, will, and affections of thoſe who are inclinable in the day of his power.

Firſt then, The Spirit of truth guides us into all truth, by thoſe Scriptures Chriſt and his Apoſtles delivered to be the ſtanding rules for poſterity; Theſe are thoſe lively Characters, in which we may read the Nature of God, and the directions of our lives; Theſe are ſuch an infallible rule of truth, that they certainly guide thoſe into it, who ſoberly and conſcientiouſly apprehend and

and follow them: They convey peace of conſcience here, which is a thing valuable above Crowns and Kingdoms; and hereafter give us ſuch poſſeſſions, as infinitely tranſcend the power of our thoughts, and exceed all humane expectations. Theſe Holy Scriptures contain ſuch a compleat body of Doctrine, that they need not any additions to be made to them; Let their own ſenſe be but ſufficiently explained, and if they are permitted to ſpeak their own mind, they will neither want *Apocrypha*, nor Traditions, nor any new Revelation neither, to render them a compleat Syſtem of Divinity; Mens own Doctrines, and not Chriſts, want Traditions to confirm them; and 'tis the pride and covetouſneſs of a Sect of men, that would make all Chriſtians groan with their burden, and void Gods Word with their own pretenſions (however they are varniſhed with the plauſible Epithets of ancient and Apoſtolical, that make ſuch additions to the Scriptures). But the Holy Scriptures, which were, at firſt, given by inſpiration of God, are able, of themſelves, when rightly underſtood, to make the

man of God perfect: And, if they are able to furniſh the Miniſter; certainly, they are ſufficient to inſtruct the people: Nay, to make them throughly furniſhed to all good works, and are able to make them wiſe unto ſalvation through faith which is in Jeſus; (*2 Tim.* 3. 15, 16, 17.). Hence is it that theſe are ſo far from being taken from the adult, that they are to be expoſed to Childrens Learning; Or elſe, it would not have been *Timothy*'s commendation, *that, from a child, he had known the Scriptures*; And if ſuch Elogiums were made in the honour of the Old Teſtament, much more praiſes muſt be given to the New, which ſhews us a way to be juſtified *from thoſe things, from which we could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes* (*Acts* 13. 39.); and *brings life and immortality to light* (*2 Tim.* 1. 10.). The Doctrines, in the Goſpel, preached by Chriſt, and enlarged upon by the Apoſtles, through the powerful inſpiration of the Holy Spirit, are ſufficient, accompanied with thoſe means appointed for their delivery, and the ordinary aſſiſtances given to thoſe that attend them with humility, to guide men

men into all thoſe truths requiſite to be known in relation to their eternal welfare. And, therefore, *bleſſed are they*, (ſayes our Saviour) *that hear the word of God and keep it* (*Luke* 11. 28.). From hence draw we the water of life; and theſe are the freſh ſprings of ſalvation, at which mankind may ſatisfie themſelves. Here have we directions to demean our ſelves in all our various conditions in the World, that we may endure both the Sun-ſhine and the Storms: that proſperity may neither ſwell, nor adverſity conſume us; S. *Paul*'s advice, therefore, to *Timothy*, muſt be attended by us alſo; *To continue in the things which we have learned, and have been aſſured of, knowing of whom we have learned them*; and that, *becauſe evil men and ſeducers ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving, and being deceived* (2 *Tim.* 3. 13, 14.). Let the infallible men of myſtical, and unintelligible, demonſtration, endeavour to prove what they cannot defend, but by their old argument of force and fire; Let them blaſpheme the Holy Ghoſt in the Apoſtles, whilſt, yet, they pretend to its inſpiration themſelves; Let thoſe argue againſt

the Scriptures being a Rule, when rightly underſtood, that can defend their Doctrine, only by a counterfeit tradition; Having no greater argument againſt the ſufficiency of the Scripture but becauſe it conſumes their Hay and Stubble; And that they can there neither fetch Wood to burn us, nor Stones to deſtroy us: But, let us, who are of the day, be ſober, and be wiſe to that which is good: And, then, as God formerly ſubjected Sathan to the ſeed of the Woman, for that by the Serpent he deceived their ſimplicity, and ſtain'd their innocence; ſo, though now he endeavours by ſubtile impoſtors to beguile ſoft and ignorant minds; he ſhall not alwayes triumph in his villany; But *the God of peace ſhall bruiſe him under our feet ſhortly* (*Rom.* 16. 20.). The Providence of God is a great deep; the reaſon of man is not able to fathom it; And, though he may, for the puniſhment of our ſins, the tryal of our vertue, or to make our adverſaries ripe for deſtruction, permit ſome to erect their Plumes, and lead captive unwary ſouls in triumph; yet, though *he that ſtandeth muſt take heed leſt he fall*, let us, ac-

according to S. *Paul*'s advice, *hold faſt the form of ſound words* (2 *Tim.* 1. 13.); and *contend earneſtly for that faith which was once delivered unto the Saints* (*Jude, ver.* 3.); and *withdraw from every brother that walketh diſorderly, and not after what has been delivered* (2 *Theſſ.* 3. 6.); And, *if we walk according to this rule, peace ſhall be upon us, and mercy* (*Gal.* 6. 16.): We need not then be afraid of the winds and ſtorms, nor yet of him that kills the body, if we truly fear him that can deſtroy the ſoul; Which none but God himſelf can do: *For* (ſayes our Saviour), *whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, is like a wiſe man who built his houſe upon a rock*; and though the rain deſcend, the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that houſe, it falls not (*Matth.* 7. 24.). The God of truth, having now given us a ſtanding rule by the glorious inſpiration of his Holy Spirit, expects that it ſhould be the general meaſure of our actions: And, as no ſign would be given of our Saviours death and reſurrection, beſides that of the Prophet *Jonas*; ſo no rule can be expected by us, beſides the

Goſpel, to the univerſal period and general Conflagration: Hence is it that S. *Paul* puts all under the ſevereſt curſe, that pervert this, or preach another Goſpel; And he does not only anathematize men, but paſſes the ſame ſentence upon Angels, if at any time they ſhould prove ſo bold and impious; Nay, he doubles the curſe, to teſtifie his faith, and proclaim the irrepealable duration of the Goſpel: *But though we, or an Angel from heaven preach any other Goſpel unto you, let him be accurſed*, (*Gal.* 1. 8.). What was indited by the inſpiration of the Spirit, is certainly true, and we may confide in it; What is added by the wit of men, may poſſibly be falſe; and therefore it is not to be be looked upon as infallible, any farther than it can be proved, either directly, or by conſequence, from the Scriptures themſelves. This is the rule which the ancient Fathers diſputed againſt the Hereticks by; and this muſt be the meaſure and rule of our faith, it being ſo full and plain, that no new Article muſt be added to our Creed; nor any other rules of duty contradictory to theſe; all neceſſary things being ſo eaſie, that any

any perſon of any ordinary capacity, uſing the methods of Gods own inſtitution, may ſoon arrive at knowledge enough to ſave him, if his will does not rebell againſt his underſtanding, and he faithfully practiſes what he knows: Nor could the end of Gods Law ever be obtained, or men be left inexcuſable, if it were ſo obſcure, that it could not unriddle it ſelf. For the end of all Laws, being the obedience of thoſe that are bound by them: How can men obey that, which they cannot, by any means, underſtand? And, if it cannot (by the ordinary helps of the learned in it) interpret it ſelf, there muſt, then, be a new inſpiration to interpret what was inſpired before: And then there will be two inſpirations, where one would have ſerved: Becauſe he that can interpret a Law plainly to the World, might have made it plain at its firſt delivery: Unleſs, perchance, we may think it wiſer to do any thing with toil and pains, which may be performed with eaſe and pleaſure: 'Tis true indeed, that many men by ignorance or wilfulneſs, when they forſake the Guides of Gods appointment, heaping Teachers to them-

themſelves, having itching ears, may be, and are, led into divers errors, under the ſpecious pretence of truth. And thus thoſe amongſt the *Galatians*, who in thoſe early dayes troubled the Church, *perverted the Goſpel of Chriſt*, (*Gal.* 1. 7.): But this is no argument againſt the ſufficiency or plainneſs of the Scripture, in things neceſſary to our eternal ſalvation: For they are, uſually, more obſcure Texts, that are to exerciſe the more Learned and Critical part of men, upon which Hereſies are founded; And this, too frequently is occaſioned by men that wrack and torture their underſtanſtandings, to conceive ſuch things as are not here perfectly to be known; Or, if they are to be fathomed by other men, yet are above the reach of thoſe, who thus ignorantly and erroneouſly apprehend them: Thus S. *Peter* (ſpeaking of S. *Paul*'s Epiſtles) ſayes, *that in them there are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt* (as they do alſo the other Scriptures) *unto their own deſtruction*, (2 Pet. 3. 16.). But another ſort there are too, that have too much ſubtilty to be accounted igno-

ignorant; Who are ſome of the perverſe diſputers of the world, that firſt ſuit their Tenets to their intereſt, and, then, violently preſs the Scriptures to prove what they were never intended for: We ſhould never, elſe, have heard, *This is my Body*, brought to prove that abſurd Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation: Nor *Feed my Sheep*, to prove the Popes Supremacy: Nor *He will guide you into all truth*, to prove his Infallibility: Nor, *He ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire*, to prove a Purgatory: When all theſe Texts are capable of fairer and more plain interpretations to another, and more coherent, ſenſe; But that the ambition of ſome men would entitle themſelves to the government of the reſt; And then frame others belief to render them tame for ſuch a tyranny, and to be ſubject to whatſoever they will impoſe, when all this while they ſuit the Articles of the Churches Faith, to the encreaſe of their own Wealth, the better to ſupport their Pride and Uſurpation. Nay, on the other ſide, we have thoſe amongſt our ſelves, who call the Pope names, and yet embrace his Doctrine; And tie that infal-

infallibility, which they rob the *Roman* Chair of, to their own ſingle and Enthuſiaſtick determinations; Who, by miſunderſtanding ſome Texts of Scripture, direct themſelves by a private impulſe, and then muſter theſe to defend it: But the Flower is not the leſs fragrant, for that the *Spider* thence will ſuck for poiſon; Nor does the Scripture ceaſe to be a ſafe, and ſufficient Rule to thoſe, who ſoberly apprehend and follow it; Notwithſtanding ſome may wreſt and miſapply it: Nor does the Spirit, at any time, contradict it ſelf: He having, therefore, inſpired ſome men to commit a Rule to writing for future Generations, to read and underſtand, and put forth a Law that is ſufficiently plain and perſpicuous; And men having reaſon and underſtanding enough, aſſiſted by the Spirits ordinary directions to guide themſelves by the meaſures of this Rule and Law into all truth: He expects, now, that they ſhould order themſelves as they do by all human Laws; That is; to believe upon the Authority of the Impoſer; and live proportionably to ſo great a favour; and labour to underſtand what he has put

put into their power to know: Remembering that of wiſe *Agur*; *Add thou not unto Gods words, leſt he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*, (Prov. 30. 6.). The authority, God has given to the Governors of his Church, empowers them to command or alter circumſtantials, *that all things may be done decently and in order*: In theſe we are to *obey them that have the rule over us*, and to ſubmit our ſelves, (*Heb.* 13. 17.): But no men are authorized to uſurp the Throne of God himſelf; To create new Articles of Faith; Or impoſe other primary rules of duty, than what they find written in the Scriptures; They are only to confirm, and explain, them: For, as we muſt not think of men, ſo neither of Doctrines, above what is written: Our language and deſign, muſt be the ſame with S. *Paul*; *To deliver that which we alſo received*, (1 Cor. 15. 3.); *So may we be workers together with God*; And when the world in the wiſdom of God (that is; by the works of God, which demonſtrate his wiſdom) knows not God; it may pleaſe him, *by the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, (i. e. what ſome men account folly) *to ſave*

them

them that believe, (1 Cor. 1. 21.). And this leads me to the next particular in which the Holy Spirit of God guides us, that are remote from the Apoſtles Age, into all truth which they delivered: By inclining the minds of ſome men, to continue that Miniſtry that muſt have its ſucceſſion unto the end of the World: And this is the ſecond way of the Spirits conduct.

That in all Religious Conſtitutions, which have been in the World, there has been a ſeparate, and appointed, Miniſtry, is more notorious than to ſpend words in the proof of it; 'Tis too deeply planted in the minds of men, and it bears an equal date with the Law of Nature fix'd in us: Without this, publick Worſhip cannot have its conſtant and orderly Being; And had not this been eſtabliſhed with the conſtitution of Chriſtianity, it would not only have been in a worſe condition, than any Religion which has poſſeſſed the world; But, than any Trade, or Occupation among us, to the obtainment of which, men muſt be learners, before they become able Workmen; Or are permitted to exerciſe their particular Callings amongſt any well

well ordered, and embodied, Society.

The ſeparation, therefore, of ſome men from the generality of Chriſtians was firſt made by our Saviour himſelf; When he called the Apoſtles, and ſent forth the ſeventy Diſciples to preach the Goſpel unto human creatures. And, when the time of his departure from the world was come; When he was to be received into his Fathers Kingdom, in ſuch a triumph as became a Conquerour, and one to whom all power was given; He delivers his full Commiſſion to his Apoſtles, ſubſtituting them, in his own ſtead, to rule his Church, and to ordain their Succeſſors; That, like the Tribe of *Levi*, they might be legitimate, and by a continued and diſtinguiſhable deſcent, they might be perpetuated to the end of the World. *As my Father ſent me* (ſayes Chriſt) *ſo ſend I you*, (John 20. 21.). Or, as S. *Matthew* deſcribes it; *All power is given to me both in Heaven and in Earth; Go ye, therefore, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever*

ſoever I have commanded you: And lo! I am with you alway (*to wit*; in the exerciſe of this power, by your ſelves, and Succeſſors,) *to the end of the world*, (Matth. 28. 18, 19, 20.). Theſe are ſome of thoſe gifts our Saviour gave unto men, when he aſcended upon high, (*Epheſ.* 4. 8.). *For, he gave ſome Apoſtles; and ſome Prophets; and ſome Evangeliſts; and ſome Paſtors, and Teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints; for the work of the Miniſtry; for the edifying of the body of Chriſt:* This is to endure, 'till we all come into the Unity of the Body of Chriſt, to encreaſe our knowledge in the Chriſtian Doctrine, and prevent our being deceived, and led into error. Hence was *Timothy*'s Office, which he had received by the Ordination of S. *Paul*, ſtiled *a gift*, (2 Tim. 1. 6.): And leſt theſe appointments ſhould not be accounted the products, and deſignation, of the Holy Spirit; Theſe gifts are attributed to the Spirit; Who is in himſelf one uniform Being, though theſe were divers, according to the variety of times and ſeaſons; *And they are all ſuch manifeſtations of the Spirit, as are given to men to profit withal,*

withal, (1 Cor. 12.). Now as Gods Providence Rules the World, though we can neither diſcover his Councels, nor are able to account for the manner of his operation; As he diſpoſes of Crowns and Kingdoms, determines our dayes, and diſpoſes our Habitations; though theſe things are accompliſhed, by an order and train of ſecond Cauſes, ſeverally deſigning, and concurring to the end; So does the Holy Spirit diſpoſe the way of the Education of ſome, and incline their minds to the Office of Miniſters in the Church of Chriſt, that Gods people may not periſh for want of knowledge; But there may be ſome alwayes to preach the Word, and to convey Chriſts Doctrine from Generation to Generation: That his Church being built upon the true confeſſion of an Holy Faith, as on a firm and well fixed Rock, *the gates of Hell may never be able to prevail againſt it* (Matth. 16. 16. and 18.). Now a ſufficient number of ſuch men, diſtinguiſhed by their Education, and manner of living, from thoſe that are more encompaſſed with the noiſe and diſturbing affairs of this life, being prepared by a previous train of

circumſtances, and having the advantages of their own parts and underſtandings; And being by ſuch means able to ſee into the notions of thoſe that have gone before them, having been uſed more to reading, conſideration, and retirement, than other men, and to weigh the juſt conſequences of things; They muſt needs attain a competent ability in the matters of Religion, to which they moſt apply themſelves; And they may be capable, through the aſſiſtance of that Spirit, who calls and gives them Authority in their Office, to become inſtruments in his hands, to guide men into the wayes of truth. In all the Arts and Myſteries of the World, we deem it a natural way to learn, by obtaining one, that is skilful himſelf, to teach us the Principles and Grounds of his Knowledge; And, we more certainly, and eaſily, obtain our deſign when we have ſuch a one to inſtruct us: So is it in matters of Religion; 'Tis a natural way to inform our ſelves in thoſe things that concern our Salvation, when we have not only an inſpired Rule; But men Educated into the knowledge of thoſe things

that

that prepare them for the underſtanding the Myſteries of Religion, and are afterwards appointed by due Ceremony and the direction of the Holy Ghoſt, *to guide us into all truth.*

Eſpecially (if in the laſt place) we conſider that the Spirit of truth confirms thoſe truths, contained in the Scriptures, unto the minds of men, by co-operating with the external appointed Miniſtrations, by an internal work upon the underſtanding and affections. That there is ſuch a thing as a Divine illumination yet continued amongſt Chriſtians, as our Church owns it by her Prayers; ſo no man can reaſonably contradict it: Not that it does render any man infallible, as the *Romaniſts* affirm; Nor inſpire men with any new Doctrine or Rules of life, beſides what it has revealed in the Scriptures; as ſome Enthuſiaſts adventure to determine: Yet, we muſt not, to avoid the extreams, forſake ſo uſeful an Article of belief, that gives God the glory of his power, and keeps us dependent upon him, and is ſo great a foundation of our prayers and praiſes. Truth is not to be forſaken by the *Jews*, becauſe the *Samaritans*

may be of the ſame opinion; Nor ſhall I (like the *Jews* in *Barbary*) refuſe to eat of that Meat which is dreſs'd by one of a different perſwaſion: Or to drink in the ſame Cup with a *Moor*, when he is a perſon of a wholſome Conſtitution, until it has undergone the Ceremony of Waſhing: Truth, in this World, will be blended with error; and 'tis the prudence, as well as piety of a Chriſtian, to make a ſeparation of the Wheat from the Chaff, and not to ſlight and refuſe the one, becauſe the other has been mix'd with it. 'Tis true indeed (as Mr. *Hales* expreſſes it). The Promiſe of the Spirit to the Apoſtles, which ſhould *lead them into all truth*, was made good unto them by private and ſecret informing their underſtandings with high and heavenly Myſteries, which never entered into the conceit of man: And, to us this promiſe is made good, becauſe what was written by Revelation in their hearts, for our inſtruction, they have written in their Books: But yet this is not all the aſſiſtance the Spirit gives us: For, though he does not inſpire us with any new Doctrine; yet he

he opens our underſtandings to the apprehenſion of the old: I am far from admitting the conceit of an impulſe to be the rule and meaſure of our lives; becauſe we know what miſchiefs have overſpread the World, when propoſitions have been vailed with ſuch a pretence, and it may be our own as well as S. *Auſtin*'s obſervation; *Tanto ſunt ad ſeditionem faciliores, quanto ſibi videntur ſpiritu excellere: Men are the more prone to ſedition, by how much the more they ſeem to excell in their inſpiration;* yet there cannot appear the ſame danger, where the Spirit only aſſiſts our underſtandings to apprehend thoſe truths which are already deliver'd, and inclines our wills and affections to embrace them; when according to the direction of S. *John*, we are not ſo credulous, as to believe every Spirit; but to *try the Spirits, whether they are of God or no*, (1 *John* 4. 1.). Now, then only may we reaſonably conclude, our underſtandings to be influenced by the Spirit, when our notions agree with the written Word; For, *to the Law, and to the Teſtimony*, (ſayes the Prophet); *if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe*

there is no morning, or *light, in them* (*Iſa.* 8. 20.). There are divers means natural in themſelves, and rationally appointed by Almighty God, for the informing men in the truths that concern them; Reading, meditation, and hearing the Word, are proper methods to inform our underſtandings, and to guide us into the way of truth; But prayer is, therefore, wont to be ſuperadded, not only to compoſe our minds, and make them fit for Divine Contemplation, by a ſequeſtration of our thoughts from thoſe external objects, that by intermixing themſelves with thoſe that are more ſpiritual, confound our Idea's and notices of things, and render our minds more looſe and extravagant; But becauſe Prayer ſupplicates thoſe aids and aſſiſtances of the Spirit, that facilitate our apprehenſions of truth; by removing objects that crumble and diſorder them; and it renders our notions more clear and durable. We uſe the means that are within our power, and ſet our reaſon and faculties on work; and then the Spirit, by a ſecret operation, enlarges our minds, and bleſſes our endeavours. Thus *Paul muſt plant, and Apollo water*, although

although *it is God that gives the increaſe* (1 *Cor.* 3. 6.). And thus the Lord opened the heart of *Lydia* to embrace the Goſpel, whilſt ſhe attended to it, as it was ſpoken by S. *Paul*; (*Acts* 16. 14.). When the Apoſtles were yet diffident concerning the truth of our Saviours reſurrection, though they had the Books of *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, and the *Pſalms* by them, in which theſe things were ſufficiently predicted; yet Chriſt himſelf opened their underſtandings, before they could apprehend the meaning of thoſe Scriptures, (*Luke* 24. 45.) As we may *do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthning us*, (*Phil.* 4. 13.); So, ſeparated from him, *we can do nothing*, (*John* 15. 5.). The Spirit of God has put much of our duty into our own power; yet has ſtill reſerved ſomething to himſelf; that we may be kept humble, depend upon him, and beg his aid: For the animal man, that is not poſſeſſed with the Divine benediction and influence of the Spirit, (who admits not of propoſitions prov'd only by Miracles) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, becauſe they appear fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them,

whilſt he remains in that condition, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned, are proved by Miracles, not Logick, (1 *Cor.* 2. 14.); Hence is it, that S. *Jude* deſcribes *ſenſual men*, to be ſuch as have not the *Spirit*, (*ver.* 19. of his Epiſtle): Now, upon the view of all this; As we have no reaſon, by our unbelief, to deprive our ſelves of what is promiſed, and to ſhut out thoſe aſſiſtances from our ſouls, which bleſs and facilitate our endeavours; ſo we have no cauſe to ſay, that our ſafety is beyond our power, and that Heaven is too high for our reach; ſince if we ſolemnly prepare our hearts, and devoutly petition the aſſiſtances of the Spirit, we may obtain it, and God will not be wanting to us, if we are not, firſt, wanting to our ſelves. This is what S. *Auſtin* ſayes, *Facienti quod in ſe eſt, Deus non denegat gratiam*; *That God does not deny his grace to him who does what is in his power*: And that promiſe of our Saviour, may relieve and encourage us; That *our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, (*Luke* 11. 13.) Let us act then with the dependence of creatures, and yet not relinquiſh the reaſon

ſon of men: Let us not think to be drawn into an underſtanding and belief of thoſe truths contained in the Scripture by the ſtrength of a Miracle, and upon the wheels of an extraordinary Providence; to be ſnatched out of the pit of ignorance by an irreſiſtible force, and informed by an Apoſtolical illumination: But, let us uſe thoſe means that are now put into our own power, for the full apprehenſion of all divine and neceſſary truth, and walk according to what we have already attained the knowledge of; that our obedience, according to what we have received, may atteſt the ſincerity of our minds: And then, if any thing yet remains, which is neceſſary farther for us to know, God will uſe ſome method or other to inform us; and, by his Spirit, diſpoſe our underſtandings to receive it; For God ſhall reveal even this unto us; and we have S. *Paul*'s word for it (*Phil.* 3. 15, 16.). And thus I have now, at length, conſidered this promiſe of *leading men into truth*, both as it concerned the Apoſtles, and as it alſo relates unto our ſelves: I have ſhewed how it guided them; and how it does ſtill lead us into

Truth.

Truth. There is now but one thing more that will want only a brief reflection, before I arrive at some practical Inferences from the whole discourse; and that is the latitude of this Promise, in relation to its object; which, as it hath been already discoursed on with reference to the Apostles; so must it be explained in relation to our selves: For this universal, *all truth*, must not be understood in the utmost extent it is capable of, no more than it was with reference to the Apostles; but it must be limited, in these following particulars.

First, The *Spirit guides us into all truth*, which may be necessary for the ordering our conversations in this World, suitable to the Religion, we are baptized into. There are directions published in Sacred Writ for our Christian deportment in all our various states and conditions: From whence S. *Paul*, in the general, exhorts, *that our conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ* (Phil. 1. 27.). Which would be a strange and insufficient direction, were there not in it a compleat rule for our lives: The duties of a Christian are, either concerning God,

God, others, or our ſelves: As to the firſt, we are commanded to *worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth*: The devotion we pay him muſt be ſuitable to his being, and the general rules given in the Goſpel (*John* 4. 24.). And we muſt *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our ſoul, and with all our mind* (Matth. 22. 37.). As to the ſecond, we have this direction, To *do to others as we would have them do unto us* (Mat. 7. 12.); And to *love our neighbours as our ſelves* (Matt. 22. 39.): And as to our ſelves, we muſt *walk honeſtly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying*: (Rom. 13. 13.). Nay, our whole duty is comprehended in one Text of S. *Paul*; who tells us, that the Goſpel teaches us, that, *denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in the world* (Tit. 2. 12.): Piouſly towards God; Righteouſly towards our Neighbours; and ſoberly in relation to our ſelves. Nor have we only theſe general directions, but thoſe alſo that are ſo particular, that we may hence take the meaſure of our duties; and ſuch prudent advice is given in all the conditions

ditions that may happen to us: That we are neither left without proper counſel, nor yet without comfort and relief.

Secondly, The Holy Spirit of Truth guides us into all thoſe Divine Truths which we ought to believe; and of theſe he has given us ſo exact an account, that no new Article is to be added to that Faith, which has been already delivered to the Saints. The *Apoſtles Creed*, in which are contained all things neceſſary to compleat our belief, is in every Article revealed in the Scripture; And men that go too far beyond it, are apt to be wiſe over much, and to think, and conclude, beyond ſobriety: and therefore,

Thirdly, The Spirit thus guides us *into all truth* that concerns our future happineſs, and ſalvation: It has informed us, that there is ſuch a ſtate, by *bringing life and immortality to light*, in the Goſpel: and it has laid out and ſmooth'd the way that leads to it: It has given ſome deſcription of the ſtate it ſelf, as far as it was fit for us to know, or our frail capacities can receive: ſo that we may accommodate the words of the *Pſalmiſt* to the Holy Spirit;

Spirit; *Thou ſhalt guide us with thy counſel, and afterwards receive us to glory* (Pſal. 73. 24.): Theſe are the truths the Holy Ghoſt ſtill guides us into, as far as our frailty is able to comport with his methods and influence: He does not now come amongſt men, to cauſe them to ſpeak divers Languages; or to work Miracles amongſt thoſe who have the Records of the Goſpel: Nor yet, to reveal ſuch ſecrets, as the Father has put in his own power, and properly belong to God alone. He does not help us to ſearch into the Cloſets and Decrees of Heaven, no more than he diſcovers the Councels of Princes; nor does he elevate mens underſtandings, to diſtract themſelves with things that are above them; But, having given the Law of Life, he guides our feet into the way of peace.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

HAving thus far accompliſhed my deſign, in confuting mens falſe pretenſions to inſpiration from the Holy Spirit of God, upon due examination of others writings, and mine own thoughts raiſed for ought I know to the contrary, either by my converſes with, or obſervations from, other men, (for I dare not call any thing mine own, ſo as to be any firſt inventor; Having no Common-Place-Book to direct me): Or elſe from ſome Superiour benediction upon human endeavours, which I have attempted in ſome part, to prove, and vindicate; And to ſhew, in this, all that I believe, or can, at this time explain, in any meaſure unto others: That there may be ſome farther uſe made of this writing, I ſhall conclude all with a few brief Obſervations and Inferences from the whole, or ſome parts of this Diſcourſe.

And,

And, *First*, Every man ought to judge for himſelf in matters of Religion that are propoſed to his belief, or practice, as far as he has abilities, and capacity to underſtand. Becauſe S. *John* exhorts all men *to try the Spirits whether they are of God*: And this will neither ſeem to be abſurd, or impoſſible, when we ſhall conſider, that we are men endued with rational faculties; that we have the uſe of the Holy Scriptures, in which all things are plain, that are univerſally neceſſary to the Salvation of mankind; That we have Guides appointed to help us in the interpretation of what is difficult, and the Holy Spirit promiſed to aſſiſt us in all; Which God gives to every one who, in earneſt prayer, devoutly asks it; And which is preſent with him, in all emergences, 'till, by a vicious life, he ſtrangely grieves him, and by an obſtinate continuance in the habits of ſin, he provokes it totally to withdraw from him. Were there an human Throne of infallibility erected, to which all others might appeal, and reſt ſatisfied with the determinations of him that poſſeſſes it; There would be no occaſion

sion of an Apostles direction to *try the Spirits*; But, since we are exhorted *to prove all things, that we may hold fast that which is good*; And the Scriptures direct us to no such human infallibility, but assure us *that what is not of faith is sin*: As it produces the greatest satisfaction to every man to settle his own notions in Religion; So it is his duty to examine the Doctrines and Opinions of men, propounded to his belief, or which are designed to guide his practice before he believes and entertains them; Making Gods Word his rule in all things that are plain and evident; And taking the assistance of those Guides, and Teachers, which God has appointed and set over him, in those points that are more difficult and obscure: And this, if done with that humility, devout prayer for Gods assistance, and true industry which becomes a man in so great a concernment, as that of Religion, will either find out all truth; Or, if he remain in any error, it will be such as God will never condemn him for; Since the most gracious God will never expect from mankind, that their apprehension of things should exceed the capaci-

capacity of their reception, and what the means of his appointment cannot help them to: Nor that either their belief, or actions, ſhould ever exceed the power of their Beings: And thoſe that ſo ſtudiouſly and induſtriouſly endeavour to give a check to mens reaſoning and examination about the Doctrines they propound, render their opinions things to be very much ſuſpected; And will give us to underſtand that their deeds are evil, when they hate the light: And as for that peace among Chriſtians that the pretended infallibility in the Church of *Rome*, or any where elſe, boaſts an eſtabliſhment and continuance of; Whilſt Proteſtants are crumbled into Sects and Diviſions: We may eaſily reply, that they have their Controverſies as well as we; and parties among them that oppoſe each other with an equal heat, and eagerneſs, in diſpute with other mortals, and are diſtinguiſhed by their ſeveral denominations; Even as the *Jeſuits* difference themſelves from all, being ſuch ſworn Vaſſals to the Court of *Rome*, that they endeavour to ſupport it to the ruine of the Church; Let the *Romaniſts*

and others, therefore, firſt pull the Mote out of their own eyes, and then they may the better ſee to pull the Beam out of anothers. But why may not ſuch peace and order, as are convenient, (and perhaps as much as can ever be obtained) be preſerved among men profeſſing Chriſtianity, by the publick Authority, checking the diſorderly actions of men, without impoſing fetters on their belief? Which it is altogether impoſſible to compel, or puniſh either, if men were ſo wiſe as to keep it to themſelves, and not trouble others by diſcourſe: I doubt not but it may be done, as well as Authority keeps men in a tolerable order, in relation to the management of ſecular affairs, though he that adminiſters it, is not infallible; Nor do all that are Subjects ſtill concur in Opinion with him. Preſerve, therefore, your judgement of diſcretion, and uſe it too, that you may not be led like blind men; when you have eyes to ſee, and helps to aſſiſt them when they wax dimm: And then having ſetled your ſelves in the true Religion,

Secondly,

Secondly, Let me exhort you to ſtand faſt in it; Not to be, like waves of the *Sea*, rolling to and fro with every tempeſt, *and carried about with every wind of doctrine*; Not to be pleaſed with every new appearance in the world, becauſe variety, in other things different from Religion, is ſo grateful to the generality of men: For in ſuch things they may have their choice, and not be limited by a ſuperiour power: But our option, in relation to Principles of Religion, muſt be directed by a ſuperiour rule and guide; And, having once found out this, we muſt not vary, upon new pretenſions, from what this preſcribes to us; Leſt, having left thoſe paths that ſhould direct us, we wander about we know not whither: Sathan gets great advantages upon unſteady minds: And 'tis eaſie to make a new impreſſion upon thoſe heads that are always ſoft, and therefore fit to receive any: Who have no notions of things fixed and ſetled, but the images and repreſentations, that are the Book in which they read all their Propoſitions, interfere with each other, and are either confuſed, or elſe are crumbled

and broken in pieces: Beſides, Religion is of that nature, that if we play with it, as a thing indifferent, or change the true Principles for thoſe that are falſe; We either loſe it quite in the midſt of variety, or 'tis with great difficulty, if ever we recover it: This the Apoſtle plainly tells us, (*Heb.* 6. 4.). It is impoſſible, or (as the word ἀδύνατον there ſignifies) very difficult, *for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; If they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.* Hence is it that our Saviour charges men *to take heed what they hear,* (Mar. 4. 24.): And S. *Paul* exhorts men *to hold faſt the form of ſound words,* (2 Tim. 1. 13.): And S. *Jude* urges, *that we ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints,* (third *ver.* of his *Epiſtle*). Let us, therefore, that are grounded in our Religion, behave our ſelves as men that are reſolved: And not by any means, be frightned from our Faith, by the ghaſtly looks, the bold threats, or the pretences, of

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new Revelations from any: But, let thoſe Scriptures we have already received, and our ſhorter Creeds drawn from them, be the ſtanding and perpetual Rule of our Faith: For variety will diſturb us while we live, and almoſt diſtract us when we come to die; and, in all probability, deprive us of our future happineſs. We cannot but be ſenſible of the dreadful condition of thoſe men that are ready to depart out of this, before they have prepared for another world; Who have all their guilts ſtanding round about them, and affrighting them with their gaſtly appearances, when they are toſs'd and tumbled upon a Bed of ſickneſs, when they can ſee nothing but death before them, and the diſmal proſpect of a blacker and worſe ſtate beyond it. And when, to all this miſerable and frightful ſcene of things, ſhall be added inward pangs and convulſions of mind, doubled and heightned either by the falſhood or uncertainty of thoſe Principles by which we direct our eyes in this view; How tragical and horrid muſt our condition be? When our Spirits, that ſhould ſupport us under the infirmities of

our bodies are ſo wounded within us, that they are a torment to themſelves; and our own doubts and vexatious uncertainties about thoſe Principles of Religion, that can only guide us through the Chambers of death, and let in the light from ſome glorious Regions beyond the grave, ſo increaſe upon us, that we are miſerably tortured betwixt hope and fear; when our ſetled belief of future things can only render our paſſage pleaſant, and our condition tolerable. Now, ſince a ſettlement of our Principles in matters of Religion, is of greater concernment to us, than the ſettlement of our Eſtates; Becauſe theſe only ſerve to defray the charges of our Bodies, whilſt they ride Poſt through a ſhorter ſtage, when thoſe prepare us for, and enter us into Heaven, and muſt maintain us through all the Ages of an endleſs Eternity; And ſince the Principles of Chriſtianity are the moſt excellent in themſelves, and have the beſt evidence of their Divine Authority, of any precepts of Religion extant in the World; And we have exhibited, in Sacred Writ, a method to find out what has been revealed from Hea-

Heaven; Let mens pretences be what they will, under whatſoever plauſible denomination; Who, that is rational, will not conclude it to be both his duty and his intereſt, if he has a veneration for God, or a due reverence and regard to his own being, to ſettle himſelf upon the foundations of Chriſtianity, and upon theſe to build his belief and practice, till at laſt, through the merit of the great Redeemer of men, he reaches Heaven? Not to pluck the *Stars* out of the Firmament, but, by the will and favour of Almighty God, to aſcend above them, and enjoy an happineſs ſuitable to mans glorified capacity in thoſe bliſful Regions, that can neither admit of a decay or period; but ſhall continue their ſtate, and to true Chriſtians their happineſs in them, through all the endleſs, unmeaſurable, ſpaces of a boundleſs and incomprehenſible Eternity. And now to conclude this exhortation with *Arnobius*'s Argument, and perſuading Rhetorick, at the latter end of his Firſt Book againſt the *Gentiles*: If men have gentle ſouls, capable of impreſſion, they cannot (under pretence of other rules)

offer any injury to Chriſt, nor reproach his Religion, but embrace both, if but upon this account only, that they promiſe to them proſperous things; Things to be wiſhed for, and earneſtly deſired: Can any one refuſe to give honour and obedience to the Son of God, who was the Meſſenger of glad tidings, who vanquiſhed the ſhades and darkneſs of the grave, and brought life and immortality to light; Who alwayes preached ſuch Doctrines as cannot hurt the minds of any, but fill them with a more ſecure expectation? *O ingratum & impium ſeculum*! as he goes on; O ungrateful and wicked Generation! If a Phyſician ſhould come to you out of a far Country, and ſhould promiſe you ſuch an univerſal Medicine, that would infallibly cure you of all diſeaſes; would you not preſently run after him, pay all the ſignals of Courtſhip and Honour, and receive him with all kindneſs and hoſpitality? Would ye not wiſh his Medicines to be infallible, by the application of which you are promiſed freedom from thoſe miſeries that attend your bodies even to the utmoſt period of your age? Nay, though the thing

thing were yet doubtful, would you not (being inflamed with the love of your own welfare) commit your ſelves to his conduct, and not obſtinately refuſe to drink even his unknown potion, in hope of your own health and ſafety? *Eluxit atque apparuit Chriſtus rei maximæ nuncintor*, &c. Chriſt, the proclaimer of great tidings, has now ſhined, and appeared in the World; What cruelty then, what barbarous inhumanity, what inſuperable pride is it with a ſupercilious diſdain, to contemn him who brings ſuch glad tidings unto men? Let us embrace therefore his joyful Meſſage, give credit to that which affords ſuch hope, and pay all reverence and honour to him, who is the meſſenger of him that made us; Who came into the World, to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt; And to give to us eternal life; Men may (if they pleaſe) contradict the kind promiſes of our Saviour, and ſuppoſe a future ſtate impoſſible; But 'tis more impoſſible for any man to prove his denial; Or, with any certainty, to convince himſelf, that there is no ſuch ſtate of men hereafter: Since therefore it muſt remain doubtful to thoſe

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that will not believe the Goſpel, is it not more reaſonable to receive this Revelation ſo well atteſted, and to renounce others that are not ſo, than to leave things of ſuch an infinite concernment at ſo miſerable an hazard? Nay, ſince there can be no other than probable proofs of future things, when Arguments are taken from their own nature, without the admiſſion of Divine Revelation; Is there not greater reaſon even when two things ſeem uncertain, to adhere to that which is more probable; And to that which gives us ſome hopes, rather than to that which affords us none at all? In this there can be no danger, to believe there is a future ſtate, there may be great in the denial of it; If it be not true, it makes us yet live with more comfort, and die with leſs trouble and reluctancy.

But perhaps all may now be willing to believe the Scriptures to be true; Yet ſuch Faith, alone, will not gain the prize, though we finiſh our courſe in fighting for it; Therefore let mens belief of a future immortality, and a joyful ſtate, evidence it ſelf in endeavours to obtain it: For that faith is only

only fancy that thinks to be crowned without obedience; And to believe the History of the Resurrection of our Saviour, and not raise our selves to newness of life, will leave us still dead in our sins: *Credere se in Christum quomodo dicit* (sayes S. *Cyprian de unitate Eccleſiæ*) *qui non facit quod Christus facere præcepit?* How can he be said to believe in Christ, who does not do what he commands him? And a little before in the same Tract; *Immortalitate potiri quomodo poſſumus, niſi ea, quibus mors expugnatur & vincitur, Chriſti mandata ſervemus?* How can we enjoy eternal life, unless we keep those Commands of Christ, by which death is assaulted and overcome? S. *John* tells us, *He that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous*; And though men pretend other signs which are as easily confuted, as they are made; Yet, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments,* (sayes our Saviour, *Matth.* 19. 17.). And S. *Cyprian*, will vouch the application, if I suppose this to be the condition to obtain it, For though the Christian Law be a Law of liberty, yet it is a Law still, that commands us to act like Religious

ous men, and not think to be drawn to Heaven upon the wheels of an extraordinary Providence, and craned up to Paradiſe by an irreſiſtable Power; We aſcend to Heaven by gradual advancements of virtue and devotion, nor can we think that all mankind are perpetually to be ſaved like the Thief, upon a Croſs: We muſt not think to mount above the Clouds, through the vapours of repeated Debaucheries, to rend the Skies, and make Heaven open by louder Oaths, and thundering Execrations; Or to jump out of *Dalilah*'s lap into *Abraham*'s boſome. No, ſurely, *they that have done good, ſhall go into life everlaſting*; *But they that have done evil, into everlaſting puniſhment.*

Thirdly, We learn from this diſcourſe, to praiſe God for giving us the Goſpel, and to admire and extol the Holy Ghoſt himſelf, who in ſuch an eminent manner aſſiſted the Apoſtles to commit ſo excellent a ſyſteme of religion to writing, that we, of the latter ages of the World, may read, what we could not hear; And by the ordinary conduct of the Spirit of truth, be guided to the knowledge of thoſe things, which

which they were extraordinarily inſpired to deliver. Not to commemorate ſo great a favour, muſt be the higheſt ingratitude imaginable: Let us be as thankful then as we are knowing, and as we increaſe daily in the one, let the other run parallel in the enlargement. God is pleaſed to own himſelf glorified by our praiſes; This we do when we praiſe him with our tongues; But then does it become moſt glorious, when it is followed with an holy and Religious life: The former may proceed from hypocriſie; But attended with the latter, it makes the whole Trinity to rejoyce, and ſecures to our ſelves thoſe Graces we already have, and engages God to give us more, as our future conditions ſhall want ſupplies: *To him that hath, ſhall be given* (ſaies our Saviour): Nay, this in an eſpecial manner rejoyces the holy Spirit of God, whoſe proper work it is to ſanctifie; And a vicious life is ſaid *to grieve him:* And how acceptable a Sacrifice the whole is, appears in what he ſayes by the *Pſalmiſt*, (Pſal. 50. 23.): *Whoſo offereth praiſe, glorifieth me; And to him that ordereth his converſation aright, will I ſhew the ſal-*

ſalvation of God. Praiſes and thanksgivings are the natural reſults of a ſenſe of mercies and favours impreſs'd upon the minds of men; And we conclude thoſe to be unworthy of a benefit, that will not acknowledge the goodneſs of their Benefactors; And the proportions of thanks, muſt take their meaſures from the benefits received; How much therefore the ſending the Holy Ghoſt to inſpire the Apoſtles, and by them to convey light unto the World, to conduct mankind to glory and immortality, exceeds all the temporal favours we do enjoy; By ſo much the more muſt our hearts be lifted up, and our lives expreſs our gratitude to him that ſent him, and to him who by his merit and interceſſion, procured him.

Fourthly, Did the *Spirit of truth*, guide the Apoſtles into all truth neceſſary to the Salvation of men; And does he ſtill influence our minds, and promote our endeavours, in making enquiry after the things that conduce to our peace? Then let us pray frequently to Almighty God, for this influence and benediction of the Spirit. Prayer was that which prevail'd with God

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to ſend him in ſo eminent a manner, and for ſuch glorious deſigns into the World, and prayer will ſtill continue him here; *I will pray the Father* (ſays Chriſt) *and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth,* (Joh. 14. 16.). Prayer has not only an influence upon our ſelves, as it fixes our minds, and makes our holy reſolutions ſteady, but mightily prevails with God himſelf, who will crown what he has commanded with ſucceſs; In this, therefore, lies our greateſt ſtrength, in the performance of which duty ſoberly, and with a ſuitable devotion, and intention of mind, we may be ſaid *to wreſtle with God*; Nay it conveys to us thoſe aſſiſtances of the Spirit, that are uſeful to us for the ſanctifying our natures, and carrying us through the hazards and various circumſtances of our lives; *For if ye being evil* (ſayes our Saviour) *know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (Luke 11. 13.). Let us not then be wanting to our ſelves in this duty of Prayer, ſince ſo great an advantage attends

tends its devout and hearty performance; and to publick Prayer, whereby God is moſt glorified, the pains are only preſence, and devotion.

Fifthly, If God ſent his Spirit upon the Apoſtles, *to guide them into all truth*, that we might have ſafe and infallible Rules to order and direct our actions by; Then ſee how God values *ſoundneſs in the Faith*, however men too much diſregard it: If either any Creed, or none at all, could have carried men to their future bliſs, Chriſt need never have come into the World, to deliver an univerſal Doctrine in the Goſpel; Nor ſent this Holy Spirit of truth, to guide the Apoſtles *into all truth*. This neceſſity, therefore, of being *ſound in the Faith*, was the reaſon why our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, caution'd men againſt Prophetical pretenders, and falſe Teachers; *to take heed what they hear*, (Mark 4. 24.). *To have a care that the light which is in them be not darkneſs*, (Luke 11. 35.). *And to take heed leſt there be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*, (Heb. 3. 12.). Hence is it, becauſe (as S. *Peter* ſayes) *there are damnable Hereſies*, that the

the unſound *Cretians* were ſo ſeverely to be reproved, *that they might be ſound in the Faith*, (Tit. 1. 13.). Hence is it that S. *Paul* commands *Timothy*, *to hold faſt the form of ſound words*, (2 Tim. 1. 13.). Which probably referr'd to ſome brief Creed, or ſummary of the Chriſtian Faith, delivered to him by the Apoſtle; Though we find them now Burleſqu'd, and flouted at; But, alas! with as little wit as reaſon. From hence finally was it that S. *Jude* exhorted thoſe, to whom he wrote his Epiſtle, *to contend earneſtly for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints*, (3. *ver.* of his *Epiſt.*) We are not now to make our own Faith, nor is it indifferent what we believe; Let us receive therefore what has been delivered out of the Scriptures, through all the ſeveral Ages of Chriſtianity, and endeavour to make our lives as pure as our Faith.

Laſtly, We may learn from this Holy Spirit of truth, to ſpeak truth; and by no methods to impoſe upon one another; That we may evidence to God, our ſelves, and the world, that the Spirit of truth has ſtill an in-

fluence upon our minds. There are a generation of *Vipers* among men, *whoſe teeth are Spears and Arrows, and their tongue a ſharp Sword*; That ingroſs the whole trade of lying, and yet pretend to be men inſpired; Theſe receive falſe News in groſs, and then retail it out to others; Their tongues indeed are very ſharp, and no wonder neither, ſince they keep the Whetſtone wholly to themſelves: Theſe are your itinerant Hiſtorians, that, to conſume our Corn, carry, alwayes, firebrands at their tails; Who lie ſo often, that they can hardly believe themſelves when they ſpeak truth, and give to all, that have had the curſe of their converſation, a plain teſtimony who their Father is: But, let not any of our ſouls enter into their ſecrets; But reſolve to reſemble the *Spirit of truth*, in abominating all lies and hypocriſie, and to qualifie our ſelves for our future aſcent to Gods holy Hill, *by ſpeaking the truth in our hearts*, (Pſal. 15.) Our Saviour *had no guile found in his mouth*; And we muſt follow ſo good an example; unleſs we think lying the Character of a Saint, and perjury to put on a Martyrs Crown; S. *Paul* did

did not think ſo, when he forbad the *Coloſſians, to lie to one another, ſeeing they had put off the the old man with his deeds,* (Coloſ. 3.9.). Let us therefore beware of Arrogance, and Calumny; Of detracting from others, or attributing too much to our ſelves; And let us imitate the Holy Spirit under the Goſpel, *by guiding our ſelves into all truth*; So ſhall we avoid both ſin and ſhame, and eternal confuſion at the great and terrible day of the Lord, that we may then give up our accounts with joy, and not with grief. Would we but endeavour to follow the ſacred Spirit of God, who is ſo ready to influence our minds, in truth, and faithfulneſs, Commerce and Trade would be more innocent, we ſhould neither betray our own ſelves by any falſe, or glozing language, nor ſhould we ſuffer by plain dealing: Oaths would again become Religious among *Engliſh* men, nor would any be unjuſtly executed by *guilty*, or ſcandalouſly freed by an *Ignoramus*; Our gracious, and truly Great, Monarch would be ſafe, without the baſe attempts of any to ſecure him; He would be our own, and we

at his wife, and lawful, diſpoſal, by his Coronation Oath, and our ſworn Allegiance to him: Every man, were there truth among us, might enjoy peace in his own capacity; he might ſit under his Vine and his Fig tree, and Liberty, and Property, would never be bones of contention more: But if we remain Hypocrites in Religion, and falſe to each other, we can neither expect that God or men ſhould be our friends; Becauſe what in us lyes, we peck at the foundations of the World, and make the whole Creation groan; We ſhake the main Principle of Trade and Commerce, when we are ſuch wretched creatures, that no body can believe us; And, we cannot but enrage the Great God, who, being truth it ſelf, has ſent his Holy Spirit unto us, *to guide us into the wayes of truth*: Whatever guilt, therefore, any perſon may, by the iniquity of times, ſtriking in with his own eaſie inclinations, have contracted to himſelf in this point; *Let him now repent while it is called to day, leſt the night come*, in which terror

terror and aſtoniſhment will ſurprize him, whoſe obſcure ſhadows will, by degrees, withdraw the pleaſing light from him, till it lodges him in a ſtate of blackneſs for ever.

The Concluſion.

WE are here placed in a World ſo full of objects, that affect our external ſenſes, that we are naturally led more by theſe, than we are by faith; And when by degrees we abſtract our thoughts, and fix our minds on things above, we either weary the powers of our minds, and make them ſink into a ſtupid inadvertency, or elſe are ſo pleaſed with the ſprightlineſs of our creating fancies, that we nimbly make Idea's in our brains of ſuch ſeeming things, as never were, nor ever ſhall be; And ſo we lead our ſelves into the belief of what was not deſigned to be the object of our underſtanding, no more than it ſhall be the ſubject of our poſſeſſion. Sometimes theſe things are projected before hand, by the cunning politick men of the World, who by ſuch means intend to impoſe upon others to carry on

on ſecular intereſts, that may, in the end, be gainful to themſelves; And, ſometimes, men by reaſon of their weak and unable conſtitutions, acting contemplation beyond their own capacity to manage it, impoſe upon themſelves, till they really believe their own thoughts of objects that yet have no real exiſtence, nor are ever like to have a being in the Univerſe. Some think too much, and others too little; Too much learning makes one ſort mad; and others are mad, becauſe they have ſo little. Some men by ſinking themſelves into a deep melancholy, and others by a nimble and exorbitant agitation of their blood and ſpirits, command themſelves into ecſtaſie or phrenſie; And then their pretenſions grow ſo big, that they become proportionably tall too, till they aſpire to the ſtorming the Walls of Heaven, attempting to blow open the everlaſting Gates, that they may pry into thoſe things which are lock'd up from the inquiries of men; And thus being puff'd and ſwelled up, it proves only to be Tympany and diſeaſe, when we think we have true conceptions, and when our own thoughts have

raiſed our fancies, we conclude, that the Spirit overſhadows us, and our obſcure opinions, or ſtrange propoſitions, raiſed by the ſudden tranſports of our minds, are too often, with confidence enough, boldly averred to be the immediate dictates of the Holy Ghoſt. Want of true and ingenuous education, and thereby the more exact aſſiſtances of reaſon, cauſes many of thoſe who would be accounted more ſpiritual than other men, to think themſelves inſpired from above, when an unuſual fear, a ſudden joy, or a powerful diſeaſe has brought Convulſions into their Nerves, and ſeiſed their reaſon and judgement with a Palſie, ſo that all their notions are jog'd into a confuſion, and their faculties can neither embrace or purſue their proper objects. But by what means ſoever the thoughts or expectations of ſuch men are lifted to an height, waiting for an impulſe, ſighing and groaning for an unuſual influence: Vain are thoſe hopes, where there is no promiſe, and uncertain that rule of determination of things which appears to be fallible and deceitful; And yet thus are all the expectations of

of thoſe who think the Spirit guides them into truth by other means than what I have already ſhewed you, or to any rules and meaſures of religious actions, than what are plainly laid down in the Word of God, or thence drawn by a fair and truly Logical deduction: If you ſhould be at the trouble to examine a little all the pretended impulſes of men, their great variety will evince their folly, and their oppoſition to each other, their deceit and falſhood. Is there any Sect, pretending to Enthuſiaſm, that does not peremptorily, and with the greateſt confidence, aſſert the Spirits internal ſeal to their principles, although juſt oppoſite to each other, and all perhaps contrary to the Scripture? This is the great fountain, which yet divides into ſo many ſtreams, whoſe waters all have different taſtes according to the chanels in which they run, and the variety of ſoil through which they paſs: This is made the cauſe of ſeparation, which in it ſelf is ſtill but one; This makes men divide from one another, and all from that Church to which they ſhould belong; proving each others Doctrines erroneous, and all

all still by the same Spirit: As if the God of order delighted in division; and different Religions, like variety of creatures, proclaimed Gods Wisdom and his Power; When he has now enjoyn'd one faith to the whole World, and sent his Son to set up his Banner for all Nations to flock to it. Divers Languages indeed were once a character of inspiration from the Holy Ghost, but different Creeds were never yet the fruits of him, that is but one. That truth which the Spirit guides men into, can be no other than the plain uniform rules of the Gospel; and whoever pretends to any inspiration to deliver a Doctrine different from this, blasphemes the Holy Ghost, and makes God a lyar, whilst he pretends his inward seal publickly to attest an open falshood.

But if there were such a thing as the Spirits impulse in these ages of Christianity, we should have some certain characters, by which we might know it, as the Prophets and Apostles must be suppos'd to have had; and, if we make it an argument to convince others, we must work Miracles to attest its original: The latter none

of

of the Enthuſiaſts pretend to; Or when ever their madneſs has attempted this teſtimony, no ſooner do they dubb themſelves by the names of Prophets, but they are diſcovered to be plain Cheats: If they pretend a way to evidence to themſelves that they are inſpired with a divine breath, to give them a warrant for doctrine or action not conſonant to the Writings of the Apoſtles; it does not only render the Scriptures inſufficient, but makes God to contradict himſelf, and wounds that Eternal Truth of the Deity into which we ultimately reſolve our belief: But let us come to the examination of the impulſe it ſelf, and we ſhall perceive in the midſt of what uncertainties ſuch men muſt be miſerably toſs'd, who ſuppoſe what they deem ſuch to be ſufficient warrant for what they then think on and propoſe to themſelves: What ſtrange and impious actions have been the conſequences of ſuch ſuppoſals, I need not now relate, becauſe they have made ſuch noiſe and ruines among our ſelves, that they are ſtill freſh among us.

But

But to proceed with this ſuppoſed impulſe or impreſſion upon mens minds, by which, deſerting the Scriptures, ſome Enthuſiaſtical men will take the meaſures of their doctrines, or actions: I know not what they mean by it, unleſs it be the heightning our perſwaſion, making our belief of a thing bold and ſtrong, and our reſolutions to act and maintain it, fix'd and zealous; And if this be what they make a rule, or a character of the Spirits guidance, ſince we find but little difference, when we view this ſuppoſed operation in perſons of various, nay, oppoſite principles, we muſt either conclude what all deliver under this pretence to be true, or elſe it is not ſafe to conduct any: The former is too wild a poſition for any that pretend to ſobriety, to eſpouſe; and therefore the latter muſt be true: Beſides, every mans reaſon may ſufficiently inform him, that our perſwaſions, and determinations of things, become as well ſetled and fix'd, and have their various elevations or depreſſions, as well by the ſtrength or weakneſs of arguments, duly weighed and attended to, as by any impulſe which can be imagined:

imagined: How then ſhall we be able to know what our reaſon dictates, and what we are confirmed in by ſtrength of argument, from what the Holy Spirit now ſeals by an impulſe, or impreſſion upon our minds? How ſhall we diſtinguiſh betwixt a ſtrong fancy, a ſetled opinion, and this pretended inſpired Doctrine? Nay, how can we difference (without recurring to the eternal Laws of good and evil, which will render this new impulſe uſeleſs) the impreſſions of the Spirit, from a ſecret temptation, and a ſubtile ſuggeſtion from him who is our greateſt adverſary?

If we dare adventure to be ſo Critical, as to pretend to new diſcoveries, and ſuch a rare ability to diſtinguiſh betwixt the motions which theſe ſeveral impulſes make: Since there can be but one ſort of action in the ſpirits of a man, (if the perception be not above reaſon miraculous) the ſame convulſions and percuſſions on the Nerves, to cauſe the ſoul to underſtand and believe, whether it be a truth or falſhood, that is repreſented; a truth from God, or a diabolical deluſion; How can the rareſt and moſt artificial

artificial Enthuſiaſt diſtinguiſh betwixt actions where there is no difference at all? For as it matters not, whether the object propoſed to the Wills embracement, be either real or apparent good, the ſame paſſion is uſed in the reception; ſo in reſpect of the underſtanding alſo, If the object ſeems to be true, it makes the ſame impreſſion with truth it ſelf. If we pretend a difference in the Images repreſented in the brain, which the ſoul, contemplating, does according to their beauty or deformity, own or reject the objects repreſented by them; ſince we find ſtill that an error preſented under the notion of truth, as long as we receive it, is as pleaſant to us as truth it ſelf, there can be no ſuch Idea's ſuppoſed, of ſuch different aſpects, that in them we can read good and evil, without ſome more ſuperiour direction: For, if there were, it would be impoſſible for a man to be deceived, that gave himſelf time to contemplate theſe Images: But if we ſhall, (as we muſt indeed), prove the truth of the Spirits impulſe, from the agreement of the thing it impells us to with the truths revealed in Gods Word; then

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the impulſe it ſelf is but a weak direction, that muſt have another more convincing to determine it: Nay, not the ſureſt confirmation of things, that admits a proof beyond it ſelf, whilſt the Scripture becomes its Judge, either to condemn or acquit it. If this were not ſo, why ſhould our Saviour give the World ſuch admonitions, and caution men againſt *falſe Chriſts*, and *falſe Prophets* that ſhould ariſe and deceive many, (*Matth.* 24.), but that he foreſaw the falſe pretenſions that would be made to inſpiration? S. *John* need not otherwiſe have cautioned us not to *believe every Spirit*, nor exhorted us to *try the Spirits, whether they are of God*; but that he knew that *many falſe Prophets were gone out into the world.* But,

(*Laſtly*) Let us conſider too, that God does not uſe to make bare his arm, and put his power to an immediate work, when the thing may be accompliſh'd as well by other means, which he has appointed to that very end: For, though this might demonſtrate his Power, yet, it leſſens his Wiſdom, to exert more ſtrength, and uſe more applications to produce an effect,

effect, which fewer might as well accompliſh; Nay, it would ſubvert that ſcheme of cauſes which his contrivance has, already, ordered; It would both render Gods rules, and mans endeavours after the knowledge of the truth, uſeleſs and ridiculous: At leaſt, thoſe Scriptures which are already revealed, would not be able to *make the man of God perfect*; which is not only contrary to the Apoſtles affirmation (2 *Tim.* 3. 17.): But S. *Paul's* argument muſt be inverted; and he might juſtly be *aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, becauſe it would not be *the power of God unto ſalvation*; whereas he plainly and confidently affirms it to be ſo, (*Rom.* 1. 16.). Why ſhould any therefore, now the Rule is given, vainly expect revelations and impulſes, and extend their belief to a bold preſumption, deluding themſelves with vain hopes? ſince theſe now are neither promiſed, nor in that manner, Enthuſiaſts wait for them, ever intended. Let us reſt ſatisfied, therefore, with thoſe truths already received, ſince no more Divine Rules of life, can rationally be expected, till the Day of Doom: And, with Gods benediction,

and

and the ordinary concurrences of his holy Spirit upon the Goſpel, let us frame our lives according to its Precepts and Commands; that walking according to theſe Rules, we may at laſt *receive the end of our faith, the ſalvation of our ſouls.* Theſe the Holy Ghoſt has ſealed to us, not only by inſpiring the Sacred Pen-men to an exact delivery; but he has confirm'd them alſo by ſuch Miracles, as at once exceed the powers of the creation, and ſurmount the objections of men and Devils. Upon this we build a rational belief, though ſome myſteries in our Religion exceed our full and perfect comprehenſion: Other pretenſions, however back'd with great names, being confidently averr'd with boldneſs and zeal, are no other than wild notions, and exorbitant fancies; Things, that if Satan, who pants and breathes for our eternal ruine, can once perſwade us to an embracement of; he then preſents a deformed Monſter for the moſt beautiful Truth. He has then caſt a veil upon our minds, and leads us blindfold into what errors he pleaſes: He ſpreads his Nets and entanglements for us, and certain he is to catch and

enſnare us: For who cannot lead the blind into a ditch? or bring him upon a Precipice, when he thinks himſelf ſafe and ſecure? How eaſie is it for the fallen Spirit, that envies men the very hopes of bliſs, ſince he himſelf is in eternal deſpair, to dart into perſons, who forſake the written Word, to attend new impulſes and revelations, thoſe poiſoned arrows, that ſhall drink up their ſpirits, and perſwade ſuch to embrace any thing, who have no better rule, than their own perſwaſions? Liſten not then to the fond fancies of any bold and paſſionate men, who, making uſe of their hot conſtitutions, convert their own natural raſhneſs into a ſeeming zeal: pouring forth thick words, and thin ſenſe, whilſt they impudently pretend the Spirits impulſe for all their rude and unreaſonable notions, and give the ſtamp of Canon to their Doctrines: Nor muſt we yet, on the other hand, ſo far make our reaſon Judge, as to deſtroy our faith; but taking the Goſpel for our ſufficient rule, let us uſe our faculties to explain and apprehend it: But by no means let us curtail or extend it, beyond what was the deſign of the impoſer.

'Tis

'Tis a ſtrange Age in which we live, when Religion is almoſt loſt, by making too ſtrict an enquiry after it, and too much curioſity in our ſpeculations, has rendered us almoſt regardleſs of our practice; We diſcourſe the graveſt and moſt ſerious points of our holy faith, with ſo much levity and diſreſpect, the indecency of the places in which we hold ſuch Conferences, adding to our vanity, that we firſt make our Religion common, and then ſlight it as mean and inconſiderable: But whatever the Sons of Darkneſs do, let us who are of the Day, be ſober, and with due reverence and a godly fear, receive thoſe impreſſions of the Spirit, which he has made in Sacred Writ; ſo ſhall we avoid the blaſphemies of thoſe, who ſo confidently aſſert Diabolical ſuggeſtions, and the black fancies, which are the fruits of a corrupted conſtitution for Divine inſpirations. For no zeal or mode of delivery, can poſſibly perſwade any rational man, that duly exerciſes his own faculties, that profound nonſenſe, or unaccountable propoſitions are deep Divinity: Nor that men whoſe natures are envious and Dia-

bolical, can possibly receive instructions from God, to promote division, raise disturbances, or to continue any, which have already had their auspicious beginnings, and, as I hope, their full progress among us. For, *that wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated; full of mercy, and good fruits, without uncertainty, and without hypocrisie: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.* Thus I have endeavoured to free the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, from the bold claims of *Papists* and *Fanaticks*, when they plead its conduct, and appropriate it to themselves, in those false Doctrines which they publish to the World.

What now remains to finish this Discourse, but only to beg, that we would be perswaded to avoid those obstructions to the compleatment and perfection of our Religion, and to practise the contrary that may perfect our obedience to the truth; that we would give unto God an undivided heart: that we would not halt betwixt two opinions, and mix Christianity with other principles different from

it. That we would not think the Croſs ſo grievous to be born, when the reward of a Crown is propoſed with it. That we would not be ſo fond of our natural diſpoſitions, but ſubmit our inclinations to Gods commands; that we would more ſeriouſly endeavour to make our faith conquer our ſenſes, in things that are not their proper objects; that the ſpirituality of that Worſhip which the Goſpel preſcribed, may be more ſtrictly practiſed and intended by us. That we would endeavour to alleviate the burden of thoſe duties, that Chriſtianity preſcribes, by the rational conſiderations of their excellency and rewards. That we would allow our ſelves more leiſure for conſideration, and thoughtfulneſs, by a retirement from the hurries and buſineſs of the World; that we would baniſh the love of the World from our hearts, eſpecially when detracting from the love of God, and the intereſt of Religion. That we would diſtinguiſh well betwixt zeal and paſſion, and let good things determine our affections. That we would not wilfully miſunderſtand the Goſpel, to ſupport either a principle or a faction. That we would

watch against the insinuations and subtilties of the Devil, who *like a roaring Lyon, walks about, seeking to devour us.* That we would beware of pride and obstinacy of mind, which hates conviction, and strengthens error. That we would not be partial in the choice of the duties of Religion, since the same authority enjoins all, and true obedience must be universal. That we would banish coolness, and not be indifferent in our choice of Religion, but be strict in the examination of our principles; that in the proof *of all things, we may hold fast that which is good.* Finally, That we would not imbibe such Opinions, as in their nature or consequences, are destructive of Christianity, that we may not ruine by particular conclusions, what we seem to hold to, and profess in the general. And (Lastly), That we would admit such evidences of what Christianity enjoins us to believe, as the nature of the things are capable of, since the expectation of more is unreasonable, and a farther demand is altogether against the Laws of discourse; and we require what is impossible to be done. This advice, if we cordially

ly embrace, will prepare us for obedience to the truth, and hinder us from being ſhaken with every wind of Doctrine, and toſs'd alwayes in the midſt of uncertainties; our judgements then will be fixed and ſetled; and if we add our ſincere endeavours to live according to the principles we receive, and pray to God to aſſiſt us in our duties, we ſhall gain peace of conſcience here, and hereafter an eternal Crown of Glory: *Which God of his infinite mercy grant to us all, for Chriſt Jeſus ſake, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed by all rational creatures, that are capable of performing it, all Glory and Adoration now and for ever.* Amen.

FINIS.

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